

Disability NOW

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Justice in sight

Disabled people wanting transplants or sex could benefit from an act which is coming into force.

The Human Rights Act, which received royal assent in November, could also help disabled people living in institutions against their will.

It comes into force "as soon as feasible", says the Government, and will allow British courts to enforce the European Convention of Human Rights, instead of requiring people to go to the European Court.

The act will give individuals rights against public authorities, including Government departments, local councils, courts, tribunals, and hospitals.

It enshrines rights to life, liberty, a fair trial, family and private life, and protection against

inhuman or degrading treatment. Disabled people may also be protected from discrimination in exercising those rights.

Disability law expert David Ruebain said: "The act establishes certain principles, many of which are of great concern."

He thought the act might give disabled people the right to medical treatment, if denying it to them was inhuman. It could help deaf people facing trial. It might also help people with learning difficulties to marry.

Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation director Bert Massie said: "It will not have a huge impact overnight. But this is a very important act."



Space hogger: A woman shakes her fist at members of Disability Action Lambeth (DAL) during a scuffle over orange badge abuse, at the Acre Lane Tesco store, Brixton. Police are now investigating an alleged assault. DAL has carried out a survey of Tesco customers and found 600 of them supported its campaign for Tesco to introduce robots to police orange badge car parking spaces.

MARION BULL

Peers rejected

The Government has rejected House of Lords calls to legalise cannabis as a medicine only.

The House of Lords Science and Technology Committee said doctors should be able to prescribe cannabis for people with disabilities such as multiple sclerosis.

The committee produced a report on cannabis after an eight-month inquiry into its medicinal and recreational uses. The report concluded that cannabis should be moved to another section of the misuse of drugs laws so that doctors can prescribe it as an unlicensed medicine.

It called for more clinical research on the uses of cannabis for disabled people "as a matter of urgency".

However the Home Office said it will not allow doctors to prescribe cannabis until further research is completed.

Drugs Minister George Howarth said the Government "will not allow prescription of any drug which has not been fully tested for safety through clinical trials."

Lord Perry of Walton, chairman of the committee, said members had made their decisions out of compassion.

He told DN: "To wait for the outcome of the clinical trials and the decisions of the Medical Controls Agency could be five years or more. We didn't feel it was humane to

make patients put up with pain and illegal use for so long."

- Over 400 readers have written to DN asking to take part in national clinical trials

of cannabis which have been set up by GW Pharmaceuticals.

- In America, five states have voted to allow cannabis use for medicinal purposes.

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Schooling gets cash

The Government is to plough £60m into special educational needs (SEN) over the next year.

The cash is part of the Government's Programme of Action for SEN, and follows consultation on its green paper *Excellence for all children*.

It includes £21m for staff training, £20m for the Schools Access Initiative to improve access to mainstream schools, and £8m to develop links between special and mainstream schools. It also includes money to develop parent partnerships which will get £18m over three years.

Speaking at the Scope conference (see page 6), Education and Employment Secretary David Blunkett said the £20m for access was a five-fold increase on what Labour inherited. "I hope it's a major contribution to bringing about equality of opportunity," he said.

Speaking at the launch of the programme last month, School Standards Minister Estelle Morris said the Government would not abolish statements, which are legal documents setting out what should be included in a child's education. It had

been feared they would be phased out.

Ms Morris said: "My criteria of success will be a system where the parent does not need to access the statement because the support is there."

The Government also reassured parents that special schools will remain.

But Labour wants mainstream and special schools to work more closely to share expertise and equipment.

Child disability groups were relieved at the news. Katy Simmons, co-ordinator of the Independent Panel for Special Education Advice, said: "The consultation allowed people to have their say and I think the Government has heard them. It is good news."

Others were worried that the action programme may be too rigid on spending. Lesley Campbell, national children's officer for Mencap, said: "We want the Access Initiative money to be used more widely. It should not just be for ramps and lifts. It should allow dinner ladies to learn ways of communicating with people with learning difficulties."



Looping good: For the first time in a UK supermarket, staff at a West Sussex Sainsbury's use induction loops to help deaf shoppers

Big cost for house hunt

A Bristol firm is charging disabled home-buyers at least £3,400 to find a home that it cannot guarantee will already be fully accessible.

Home search firm Tilley Carrow will help disabled people find homes in the west country. It has teamed up with the firm DisabEquip who can



Shaw: not enough access details

FROST STUDIO SHAMBLES

then do adaptations. But Tilley Carrow will make a registration charge of £400 up front, and at least £3,000 when contracts are exchanged.

Ginnie Shaw, director of the National Disabled Persons Housing Service, said there was not enough information on accessible housing to make such a system effective.

Penelope Tilston, a partner with Tilley Carrow, admitted there was no list of accessible houses. But she said the firm could negotiate house prices down by as much as the main fee of £3,000, which was only paid if a deal went through.

Access slow in Braille

A visually impaired man was left waiting until the last minute for a Braille version of a Government consultation paper on disability rights.

Steve Darling, a councillor in Devon, asked a Government hotline for the document on Part 3 of the Disability Discrimination Act on goods and services which comes into force in October 1999.

But Mr Darling, who asked for the document in various forms for a local visually impaired group, did not receive the Braille version until the end of October, just weeks before the consultation ended.

He said: "I was incandescent. This is about access and yet the consultation discriminates."

David Grayson, chairman of the National Disability Council, which ran the consultation, said Braille had been available, except for one week. "We have gone out of our way to be accessible," he said.

But a Government spokeswoman admitted it had not met demand as fast as it wanted to.

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Fund is not spent

Government announcements of an extra £12m for the Access to Work scheme last month were marred by an admission that £4m of last year's budget was left unspent.

The £12m, which will provide money for equipment and support for disabled employees, is part of a £30m package of measures over three years to help disabled people find jobs.

£15m from the same package will be used to set up 1,500 new supported employment places and to provide subsidies for companies who set up or extend schemes.

Yet in a written reply to Mark Oaten, Liberal Democrat disability spokesman, Leigh Lewis, chief executive of the Employment Service, admitted that only £15m of last year's £19m budget was spent. Mr Oaten said: "It is disgraceful that the Government has failed to take a pro-active approach in tackling low take-up."

A spokesman for the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) told DN: "We expect there to be a greater take-up this year because we have reduced the small firms threshold of the Disability Discrimination Act from 20 to 15 and abolished the employer's contribution for those that are self-employed."

Some disability groups hope that putting more money into Access to Work could mean an end to all employers' contributions to the scheme. Richard Wood, chief executive of the British Council of Disabled People, said: "If there is an underspend on last year's budget there is an argument for getting rid of the employer's contribution and making the Government pay."

Others say more promotion of the scheme would help. Susan Scott-Parker, chief executive of the Employers' Forum on Disability, said: "We want more small businesses to know that it's there."

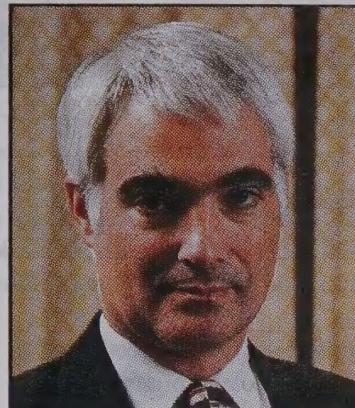
A DfEE spokesman said the Employment Service was working on a funding strategy.

Thank you to everyone who replied to DN's physio survey. Keep sending in your views. Results come out next month.

Reform plans slated

Disability groups are unsatisfied with the Government's welfare reforms, which some call back-door means-testing.

Social Security Secretary Alastair Darling announced the



Darling: wants changes to SDA

measures in the consultation paper *Principles into Practice* in October which follows plans set out in the green paper *A New Contact for Welfare*.

The reforms include changes to Severe Disablement Allowance (SDA). New claimants of SDA under 20 will get an extra £25 per week but those over 20 won't be allowed to claim it. Incapacity Benefit

(IB) is also being reformed with a new "employability test" to replace the all-work test. This new test will look at what skills people have as well as what they can't do. The Government is also abolishing the Benefits Integrity Project (BIP).

While disability groups have praised the decision to end BIP, they remain worried over what will happen now.

Director of the Disability Alliance Lorna Reith said: "It is clear that BIP will continue until they've sorted out something to put in its place. This welfare reform package is unacceptable." (See also page 6.)

The changes to SDA also caused concern.

Director of the Disablment Income Group Pauline Thompson said: "There is a significant group of people who will be affected by this such as older disabled married women who might get caught with no benefit if they can't claim income support."

There is also concern over changes to IB for new claimants. The changes will



Nice one, Tony: Prime Minister Tony Blair discusses welfare reforms plans with residents at Leonard Cheshire's Chiltern Home.

mean that only those who have recently had jobs and made sufficient contributions to National Insurance (NI) will be entitled to claim the benefit.

New claimants who have already started up an occupational or private pension will be further hit. They will have their IB reduced by 50 pence for every £1 over £50 they receive

each week from their own pension fund.

A spokesman for Manchester Welfare Rights Advisers Group said: "This is means testing through the back door. It is eroding away the NI principle and is unwelcome."

See DN next month for the yearly benefits uprating.

Gateway not too clear

Government departments are sending out mixed messages on the new Single Gateway scheme being introduced next year.

The scheme will offer everyone of working age on benefits, including disabled people, a simplified system to find out about work and social security. It will include an interview to provide advice and information on training, benefits or jobs.

The scheme will be piloted in four areas in June next year and a further eight next November.

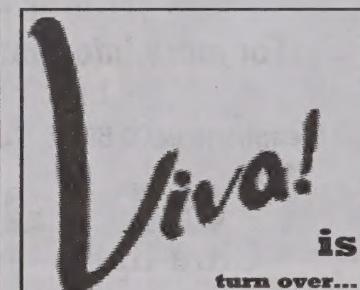
At the Scope conference, Stephen Timms, junior Social Security Minister said it would be "a condition of benefits" for people in the pilot areas that they attend an interview. He

added that interviewee's circumstances will be considered.

"No one will be required to attend an interview when it is unreasonable for them to do so," he said.

The Department for Education and Employment made it clear to DN that there would be no element of compulsion in the pilots. A spokesman said: "People will not have to attend an interview in the pilot schemes."

Disability groups are worried that even if there is no compulsion next year it will happen later on. Neil Betteridge, head of projects and campaigns for the Royal Association of Disability and Rehabilitation



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NHS could improve for the millennium

The Government should bring about real improvements in the way the NHS provides services for disabled people by the millennium, a group representing users said last month.

The umbrella group emPOWER also put forward charters for users of wheelchairs and other equipment, while repeating a call for a Disablement Services Authority,

which would oversee and improve provision.

Joe Hennessey, vice chair of emPOWER, said services varied around the country. He highlighted differences in eligibility criteria between wheelchair services and in waiting times for assessments. "We have 12 months in which we want to see tangible progress," he said.

Rights in sight

The creation of a Disability Rights Commission is now definitely on the horizon. By the time you read this, the establishment of such a commission should have been promised in the Queen's Speech.

But elsewhere last month Government ministers were still

keen to defend their own record. Speaking to the All-Party Disablism Group, Minister for Disabled People Margaret Hodge deflected criticism for dropping the threshold of employers who fall under the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) from firms with 20 staff

to those with only 15 staff. Some wanted a drop to firms with just two staff. But Mrs Hodge said: "The last thing anyone wants is small firms trying to avoid complying because they are afraid of the act's implications. We must change attitudes."

Standards

Health Secretary Frank Dobson announced that the NHS was to set clear standards for the care of old people.

But few people seem to think that means old age pensioners have a bright future. A third of respondents to a Fabian Society survey think state pensions will be scrapped within ten years.

A similar proportion think incapacity benefit will fall in value or be abolished.

If so, that would add to the poor quality of life faced by young people who have had a traumatic brain injury. A report by Rehab UK suggested that every year 60,000 young people who have had a traumatic brain injury fail to return to work. So they "disappear" into a lifetime of benefits, costing the taxpayer of £266m a year.

Faster aid

Government plans for legal aid could cut the long delays claimants face in getting justice. The Legal Aid Board has



Voice of experience: Wheelchair user Tommy Burns (left), who was injured in a car crash, joined campaigners from road safety group Brake outside the Motor Show in Birmingham last month as part of the first ever National Road Safety Week. He helped release 70 balloons, one for every person killed on the roads each week. The Government claims 90 per cent of crashes are due to driver error.

Car relief

The Disabled Drivers' Motor Club has received assurances from the Prime Minister that there are no plans to tax the mobility component of disability living allowance (DLA) (see *DN*, August). In a letter Mr Blair said: "The green paper on welfare reform did not put forward any proposal to tax DLA, and that remains the position."

Good news for motorists, then, but not so good for those on public transport. London's Capital Transport Campaign has criticised one London bus company for its choice of new apparently accessible buses.

The buses operated by Arriva South London have steps at the door, but they do not lower automatically. The driver can operate a ramp to let a wheelchair on, but only if the bus is right by the kerb. And few seats on board can be reached without encountering a step.

Howlers

NatWest Bank was criticised after it refused to accept 24 different proofs of identity a disabled man offered when he wanted to open an account. It insisted he had to produce two types of document which, as a man with severe diabetes, he says he has little use for – a driving licence and a passport.

American Airlines was forced to grovel after it said a girl passenger with cerebral palsy, who is fed through a stomach tube, would have to eat in the toilet.

But the BBC was praised after an episode of *Casualty* included a story about a boy whose hydrocephalus had been ignored by his grandfather – a retired doctor – who claimed he was just complaining of headaches to get off sports.

Association for Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus publicity manager Tony Britton said: "This brilliant drama captured what we have known for years – that even doctors can fail to identify symptoms."

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Group to set trend for shops

Trendy clothes for people of every shape and size, clothing advisors, and an accreditation scheme for shops which are accessible are just some of the ideas of Awear, a new organisation of disabled people and fashion industry experts.

Awear has received £80,000 from the Department of Health and wants to set up a forum where disabled people and fashion professionals discuss ways for companies to ensure their staff, premises and clothes are accessible to everyone.

Alison John, Awear's disability equality consultant, told *DN* that even big companies who think they offer good practice could improve. "There are lots of organisations that think they are disability aware but in real terms are not there," she said.

Awear is seeking further funding for the accreditation scheme, which it estimates will cost £220,000.



Tv's Mik Scarlett talks fashion with Saadia Neilson of Awear

In brief

Teenagers get surfing

A new website will enable visually impaired teenagers to discover a new taste for reading.

The Fiction Café, designed by the National Library for the Blind, offers visually impaired young people the chance to browse books, find out their "reading personality" and chat about what they have read.

The Fiction Café's website address is: www.nlbuk.org

Briefs raise awareness

The Group for Solicitors with Disabilities (GSD) is leafleting colleges to raise awareness of its work. The group's 400 members work in mainstream law and give free advice on disability law to other lawyers. Chairwoman Elenor Williams said: "We celebrate our tenth birthday next year and want to open up our services."

Contact the GSD via the Law Society, tel: 0171-320 5793.

Shunned carer turns hotelier



Ms Maclean in front of her accessible hotel, in Ben Nevis's shadow

A disabled Scottish woman is to turn a house she built for her mother into a hotel for families with disabled members.

Helen Maclean, who lives near Ben Nevis, built the house for her mother who has Alzheimer's disease. But she has not moved in yet.

So Ms Maclean, who has Crohn's disease, is turning the

house into an accessible holiday centre, at £200 a week per person full board (children go half price). It offers activities such as crafts and storytelling.

"I hope to raise awareness," she said. "If I have a whole load of disabled people here, I can put pressure on other services."

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Assuming is not fair

Tribunals should not make assumptions about people with mental health problems, the Employment Appeal Tribunal (EAT) has warned, after ruling that a man with paranoid schizophrenia did come under the terms of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA).

Dr Matthew Goodwin was dismissed a few months after joining the Patent Office in Wales in 1996, despite his psychiatrist's view that he had recovered from a temporary deterioration of his condition.

An industrial tribunal had ruled by a majority vote in November last year that Dr Goodwin's condition did not

fall within the terms of the DDA. But the EAT said it was obvious that it was covered.

The EAT warned that tribunals should not assume that because an applicant was able to carry out a day-to-day activity that meant his or her ability to do so was not impaired.

And it said tribunals must estimate what effect the condition has on an applicant without accounting for any treatment he or she may be having.

Solicitor Paul Daniels, of Russell Jones & Walker, who represented Dr Goodwin, said the case "will make it easier for other disabled persons to show they are protected by the act".

Stabilisers set for Millennium Exhibition

A set of bicycle stabilisers for disabled children, a guide to visitor attractions for visually impaired people, and a wooden wheelchair are among products which could appear in the Millennium Dome.

All three have been given "Millennium Product" status.

Balance Trainer stabilisers were first developed by engineer David Good. He said:

"With these stabilisers you reduce support gradually, so it is easier to learn to balance."

The Dog Rose Trust's Dorcas Project is a way-finder for visually impaired people in places of interest. It uses models and sound commentaries.

The Mekong Wheelchair, by the Motivation Charitable Trust, is a wooden wheelchair designed for use in Cambodia.



The Dorcas Project already helps blind visitors to Chester cathedral

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The Government's proposed reforms to disability benefits mark the first stage in a welcome move away from the idea of automatic benefits, *The Guardian* columnist Polly Toynbee told Scope's conference on *Welfare Reform – the Equality Debate* at the London Arena in November.

450 people came for speeches, seminars and debate.

Ms Toynbee claimed that Social Security Secretary Alastair Darling's suggestion that some disability benefits should be means tested would be the first step in a gradual change in social security that could eventually see the state pension abolished.

This would be no bad thing, she argued. The system was so expensive to run that the state pension had never been adequate for the poorest section of society. Many rich pensioners felt they did not need it.

She proposed that those who paid National Insurance were only guaranteeing themselves support if their total income fell below the poverty line. They would not be guaranteed a pension or sickness benefits if they were well off. This system would have the advantage of targeting benefits at people who needed them most.

"Our social security system is

Disability in the arena

Scope's conference tackled welfare reform

easily affordable," she said. Her proposals would not save money, but the aim "shouldn't be to save money."

Labour MP Malcolm Wicks had other views. He did not want arguments over means-testing benefits to dominate



Key speaker Polly Toynbee with Scope member Simon Stevens

welfare reform. "We must hold on to the idea that most of social security should be based on rights and the contributory principle."

Social Security Minister Stephen Timms highlighted the Government's benefits plans for disabled people. Three groups would be supported, he said: those who continue to work after becoming disabled, those leaving work because of increasing disability,

and those who have never worked. (*Details, page 3*).

But director of the Disability Alliance and member of the Disability Benefits Consortium Lorna Reith said: "Overall this package involves cuts of over three quarters of a billion pounds in disability benefits. This is not acceptable to the disability movement."

National Disability Council chair David Grayson, who chaired the Scope conference, warned that the disability movement would have to do more than just respond to Government agendas.

"We have got to understand the external environment in which our debate has to be taken forward," he said.

This applied to rapid changes in technology, particularly the internet.

"We need to make sure, for example, that when the supermarkets install on-line shopping, that is not seen as an excuse not to make their stores accessible," he said.

"The Government has also said that, by 2002, 90 per cent of everything it buys will be on



Meet the ministers: Peter Budgen (left) of Disability Audit Services (DAS) with Margaret Hodge and David Blunkett. Flanking them are Scope's Richard Brewster and Jim Hoskisson. DAS had one of the 120 stands at the All Round Ability exhibition, alongside the conference.

electronic commerce. We need to make sure that, from the outset, these developments take account of the needs of disabled people."

Doug McAvoy, general secretary of the National Union of Teachers, said he believed – as the Government does – in the principle of inclusive education, but only if it is properly funded. He saw the latest Government plans for investment in special education needs (*see page 2*) as "a significant and important step down that road."

He particularly welcomed the £20m as an on-going investment for improving access to the curriculum and facilities. And he favoured retaining the statement as a shield for parents.

Paul Ennals, chief executive of the National Children's

Bureau, thought that the plans had still not addressed some tough questions, such as how to give parents the confidence to dispense with statements.

Writer Dr Jenny Morris made a human rights argument for community care. Support services should be about breaking down the barriers and giving control and choice, as the Independent Living Fund tries to do.

She emphasised "inter-dependence", and how "caring" is interpreted as "caring for" not "caring about", which diminishes disabled people and their relationships.

While the conference was criticised for not involving more disabled people ("too many suits"), it was welcomed as confirming Scope's determination to influence the disability agenda.

No room at the inn

Scope launched a hotel access petition at its conference after it couldn't find enough suitable rooms close to the London Arena in East London.

178 visitors signed the petition aimed at two major hotels being developed in the area.

Scope needed 50 rooms for wheelchair users. It found 20.

30 people had to be accommodated in less appropriate rooms or at an inconvenient distance. There were many complaints.

A Scope spokesperson said: "It is quite galling if you bear in mind there are hotels with hundreds of rooms just 20 minutes down the road."

• *All Go!* is a national directory giving details of accessible hotels with restaurants. It was compiled by disability consultant Jonathan Kaye, a wheelchair user. £4.95 from bookshops or tel: 0171-383 2335.

Members pop key question

Scope members asked the \$64,000 question at the charity's 46th AGM in November: who is Scope for?

The question was timely since Scope's 620 individual members, many of whom do not have cerebral palsy (cp), now outnumber the 260 nominee members from local groups. New members are involved in 13 partnership committees around the country and in the national forum, yet, as Maureen Reece from Kent told the AGM: "We don't feel included."

Furthermore, this year's election for the Executive Council has produced – for the first time – a majority of disabled people.

Dave Hayes, a vice-chairman, agreed that people with disabilities face common issues, but people with cp shouldn't lose the services they already get.

Chairman Jim Hoskisson said that he and chief executive Richard Brewster were preparing a paper for the Council in December on who Scope is for, and members would be

involved in the debate.

The present Scope Plan aims that "by 2005 all people with cerebral palsy, their families and carers, will have access to services which meet needs, full civil rights and the opportunity



AGM speaker Chris Hayes shows Jim Hoskisson his *Sheep have rights too* picture

to participate fully in Scope," said Richard Brewster.

His "challenges" for the coming year include continuing the empowerment of disabled people in Scope (for example, jobs and decision making); deciding priorities for services and campaigning; and making the voice of Scope members and users heard by government.

Breaking with tradition, six members of the Council reported on Scope's achievements.

The best news was an operating surplus of £1,855,000 on a total income of £89m in 1997-8. "A significant improvement", commented honorary treasurer Les Unwin. But only about £10m was discretionary income "with which to change the world."

"So long as we have to subsidise our contract services, not only are we subsidising the Government, we are restricting our discretionary spend," he said.

He warned that Scope is unlikely to have a surplus in 1998-9 because of a "strong downturn" in income, especially from shops, and a fall in the stock market. Action was being taken to secure future surpluses.

Council elections. Re-elected members: Peter Clery, Sharon Hughes, Phil Roberts, Glynn Vernon. New member: Richard Gamble. Hon officers: Jim Hoskisson (chairman), Peter Clery, Pauline Fiddler (vice-chairs), Les Unwin (treasurer).

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Bid for clinics

Teenagers with arthritis are losing out because there are not enough clinics specifically aimed at helping them.

The clinics can deal with the particular needs of adolescents, and help reduce pain and depression, the Arthritis Research Campaign (ARC) will claim during an education week from 4-10 January.

The charity wants to see more clinics like the Freeman Hospital in Newcastle, being built. Dr Helen Foster who runs the clinic, said: "It can be really



DAVID T. HEWITSON

Not such a dog's life for Emma Cole, 17, of Northumberland

hard for an adolescent to cope with having arthritis. They see all their friends going out partying and they are having to take medication, wear splints and rely on their parents for getting around."

There are around 14,500 youngsters with juvenile and chronic arthritis in the country.

During the same week the ARC will also highlight the job discrimination which youngsters with arthritis face.

Spraying in safety

The National Asthma Campaign (NAC) has expanded its advice line to cope with people's worries about changing to CFC-free inhalers.

A number of new products will be launched in the new year, and all inhalers will have to be CFC free by 2003. The medicine may leave the new inhalers more slowly or could taste different.

NAC, tel: 0345-010 203

Backs move forward

American scientists are to start human trials on a drug which could allow people with spinal cord injuries to walk again.

The scientists at Vanderbilt University in Tennessee, led by Professor Carl Hellerqvist, gave the drug CM101 to 26 mice one hour after having their spinal

cords crushed. Within 2 to 12 days 24 of them could walk.

CM101 reduces scars which prevent nerves reconnecting and can also stop cells degenerating. None of the 14 mice who were not injected walked again.

The drug is scheduled to go on trial in humans next year.

Professor Hellerqvist said: "Within hours of someone being injured they would be treated with CM101. If this allows nerves to reconnect then hopefully you would get all your functions back."

Stephen Bradshaw, director of external affairs at the Spinal

Injuries Association, agreed that it was exciting research. But he added: "We've had so many false dawns in relation to spinal cord injury that you need to be careful not to raise up false expectations. It will be fascinating to see clinical trials with humans."

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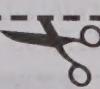
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More to act on

The Disability Discrimination Act needs teeth, says Peter Baber

How deceptive appearances can be. The four disabled people pictured right have all suffered what any reasonable person would call discrimination.

But it seems only one of them would have a case in court.

This comes as no surprise to disability law expert Paul Daniels. "The goods and services provision in Part 3 of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) is very limited at the moment," he says.

Read on to see why it needs to be strengthened. Then agitate.

Case 1: Yvonne Waft

Twice in six months Yvonne, a wheelchair user, has met up with friends in Islington, north London, only to be denied access to what non-disabled people take for granted – a loo.

In a Firkin pub on Upper Street, the disabled toilet was locked and staff refused to open it. Then in Bernies restaurant also on Upper Street, she had to wait 25 minutes while staff cleared the toilet of tools.

Discrimination? Not under the DDA at the moment, says Mr

Daniels, a solicitor with Russell Jones & Walker. "Yvonne is suffering from the premises' failure to make reasonable adjustments, as specified in Section 21 of Part 3," he says. "But that law is being phased in over several years. She couldn't succeed in a claim over Section 19, which covers less favourable treatment, either. The owners would say: 'We have a disabled toilet, and offer the same service for all customers.'"

Case 2: Margie Woodward

Margie has cerebral palsy (cp). On a business trip last month she decided to treat herself to a pre-dinner drink at the Nutshell pub in Bury St Edmunds.

But the barman said she was drunk, would not listen to her explanation, and threw her out. Greene King, the pub's owner, has since apologised.

Discrimination? Mr Daniels thinks Margie would have a case under Section 19.

Case 3: Angela Rattray

Angela and her husband, who are both visually impaired,

arrived at St Albans station in September, with their children and her husband's guide dog, on their way to see a relative.

But the first taxi driver they came to at the station's taxi rank said he was allergic to dogs. He barred them from talking to other drivers, said he was ordering a "special" taxi, and then swore at them when they rang up their relative because this taxi failed to show.

Discrimination?

Section 37 of Part 5 of the Act makes it an offence for certain modes of transport, including taxis, not to cater for guide dogs. But guess what? It's not yet in force.

Case 4: Kip Chillingworth

Kip's mother Sadie is continually having to pay excessive admission charges to museums and theme parks – mainly because he needs two carers.

She found Chessington World of Adventures, in Surrey, charges full price for all carers, and Legoland in Windsor would have charged £29.50.

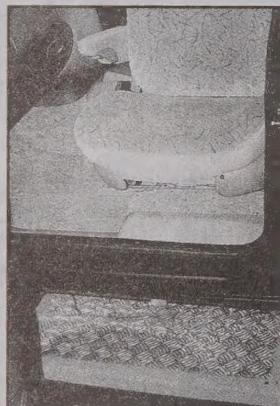
Discrimination? Not according to present law. "He is not being



Clockwise from top left: Yvonne Waft; Margie Woodward; Angela Rattray; and Kip Chillingworth with carers Maxine Brown (left) and Ruth Beesley. Only Margie has a clear case, says Paul Daniels.

offered a worse service," says Mr Daniels, "because he is being allowed access to the theme parks. There is a case

about reasonable adjustments for carers, but again the reasonable adjustments part of Section 3 is not yet in force."



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Sour taste of medics

Parents of children with chronic fatigue are facing rough treatment if they dare to challenge doctors, Peter Baber discovers

Years of scepticism about the existence of myalgic encephalomyelitis (ME) seemed to be over earlier this year, when the Government's chief medical officer Sir Kenneth Calman set up an expert group to advise on training for treating the condition.

That, however, was in July. Five months later the group has yet to meet, and *DN* investiga-



Phull: parents must come first

tions suggest that, if anything, doctors' mistrust of people who claim to have the condition is getting stronger. Particularly when those people are children.

In October the case of Child B from the West Midlands gained some publicity. His parents went to court to stop their community consultant paediatrician – and the social services – forcing him to go to a psychiatric unit at Birmingham Children's Hospital for a new kind of "graded exercise" treatment which two consultants had said was not right for him.

What outraged the parents was the paediatrician's attempt to use the Children's Act to force the issue.

"The doctor was merely invoking the law to override our son's existing advice," the boy's mother told *DN*. "The endgame he and the social services were playing was to make our son a ward of court."

Kuldipp Phull, the family's solicitor, is hopeful that the ruling giving the parents the right to make the final decision will change doctor's behaviour.

"Where children are receiving competent medical advice the parents are happy with, you can't have another doctor saying: 'I don't agree', and enforcing proceedings," she says.

But the ruling is not necessarily binding. And evidence shows

other social services are only too willing to step in.

One month ago Scunthorpe mother of two Lorraine Markham was given four hours' notice of a meeting which, the social services lady on the phone told her, "has been arranged to discuss your son's ME". (At that stage her son Ryan, 15, was still waiting to be officially diagnosed.)

She managed to make it, only to find sitting across the table not just social services but also the community paediatrician who had been pressing her to admit Ryan for graded exercise. She had been unwilling to do this, because, she says, the same programme had made her daughter Cherie, 19, who also has ME, "ten times worse".

But the people at the meeting started getting threatening.

"One doctor was on about how I had interfered," she says. "Another was concerned that I had two children with the same complaint. They said if they did diagnose Ryan as having ME he would be treated in the same way as my daughter. They also told me not to read anything about ME."

The heat has subsided now – no further mention has been made of "graded exercise" and Ryan is being assessed for home tuition – but Mrs Markham is concerned that the pressure could be put on her again.

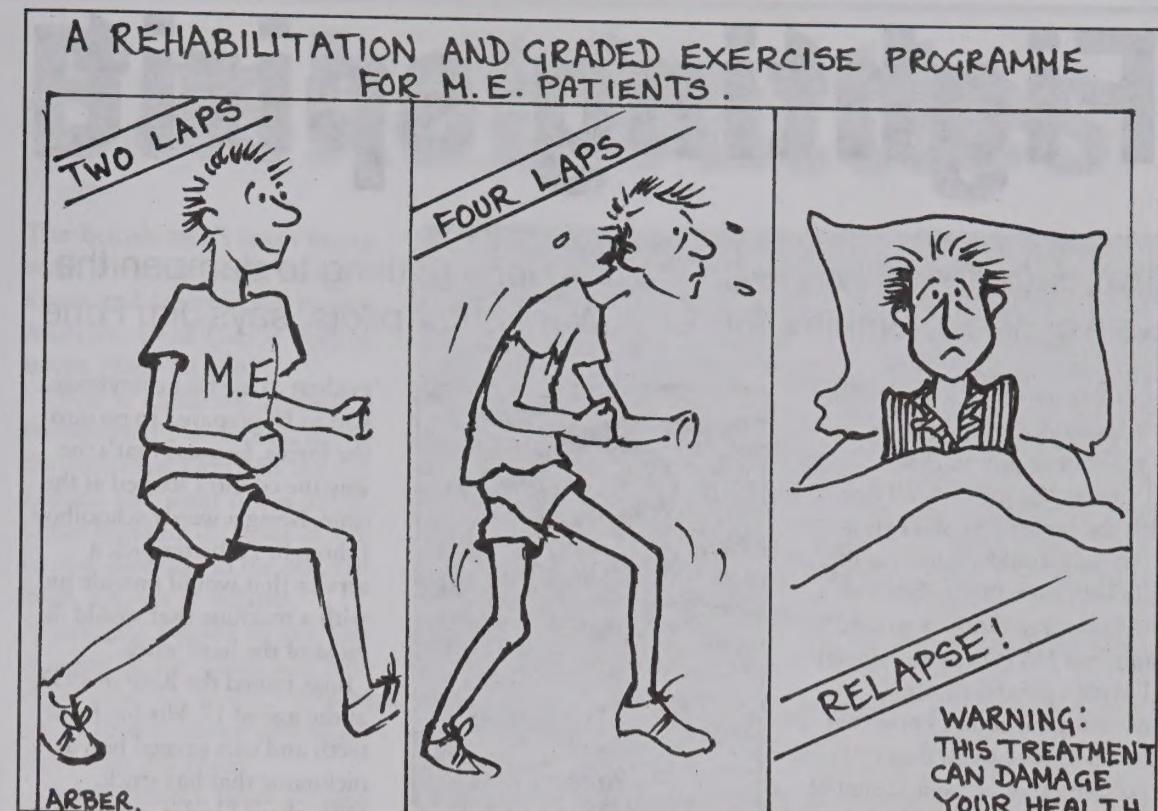
So why do doctors seem so determined to proceed with this treatment?

The doctor in the Child B case would only say he was concerned with the child's welfare.

But Dr Nigel Speight, who advised Child B's parents, says he gets calls from anxious parents "once a week" on this issue. He blames reaction to an article in the *British Medical Journal* (*BMJ*) last year by doctors at London's St Bartholomew's Hospital which advocated graded exercise for convalescing adults.

"Everyone regards it as gospel," he says. "But it's dubious reasoning to say this study also applies to children."

Dr Alan Franklin, who also advised Child B's family and has been studying ME for the



Action for ME's view of graded exercise, as seen in the charity's cartoon book *The Joke's on ME*

ARBER

best part of a decade, agrees that the *BMJ* article has been grossly distorted. "No account has been taken of the symptoms the exercise causes," he

'One doctor was going on about how I had interfered. Another was concerned because I had two children with the same complaint.'

says. "Children can be easily induced into this exercise."

Dr Speight also fears the old idea that ME is not a real con-

dition, only a state of mind, may be at work here. He has seen one case where a doctor diagnosed the problem (from a distance of 500 miles), as the parents having Munchausen's syndrome by proxy – the same attention-seeking disorder which child-killing nurse Beverley Allitt had.

Although he has agreed to sit on Sir Kenneth Calman's committee, Dr Speight has little confidence that the chief medical officer's pronouncements will make much impact on the medical world. "He's been trying to get doctors to change their minds for years," he says.

"But I have not noticed anything changing."

For the time he wants to make sure as many health trusts who want to push graded exercise are aware of the Child B case.

Cherie Markham for one pulls no punches about what the treatment is like.

"It made me ever so much worse," she says. "They did it too fast. The activity went up so much every day I just couldn't cope. It took a long while to get back to where I was. I wouldn't recommend it."

Action for ME, tel: (01749) 670799.



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Fighting spirit

Two decades of living with ms has done nothing to dampen the soul of one of Britain's top Cold War fighter pilots, says Jim Fone

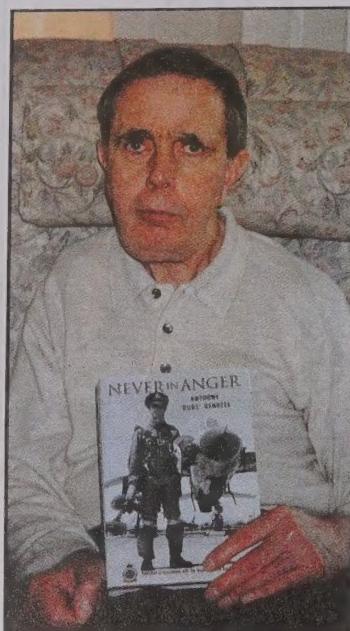
It was while serving as a Flight Commander with an RAF Phantom squadron that Anthony "Bugs" Bendell first felt the symptoms of a condition that would change his life.

In February 1970, while flying to Andoya in Norway to take part in a NATO exercise, he felt ill with a painful throat infection. He didn't know it at the time, but he can now recognise this as the first sign of a condition that, eight years later, would be diagnosed as multiple sclerosis (ms).

When his sore throat passed, Bugs was left with a sensation of pins and needles on the right side of his face and then around the rest of his body. Over the next few years, more serious symptoms included double vision, partial paralysis and a lack of co-ordination. In time his condition meant he had to give up flying and, eventually, in 1987, to retire from the RAF.

Now, over ten years later, he has come round to write about his experiences as one of this country's finest fighter pilots – and his struggle against ms – in an autobiography.

Its title, *Never In Anger*, refers to the fact that the Cold War stand-off meant he never had to



"Bugs" with new book today

fire at the enemy. But it also refers to his condition. "There's no point in getting angry with ms," he says. "Of all the emotions, anger is a complete waste of energy, and you have no energy to spare with ms."

Bugs, who's now in his early sixties, wanted to be a fighter pilot from an early age.

"I grew up in the south of England during the Second World War and we saw the fighters weaving out of the barrage balloons," he says. "Even as a youngster it seemed

evident to me that everybody had to be prepared to go into the forces, because that's the way the country looked at the time. Being a weedy schoolboy I thought I'd better pick a service that would provide me with a machine that would do most of the hard work."

Bugs joined the RAF in 1953, at the age of 17. His big front teeth and ears earned him a nickname that has stuck. "Whether I liked it or not, that was my name," he says. "I got away lightly: a chap called Poole was known as 'Cess'."

During his career, he flew more than 4,000 hours in aircraft as varied as the Tiger Moth, the Harvard, the Lightning and the Phantom F4. His career took him to Canada, Germany, North Africa, Cyprus and the USA.

It also spanned a time of great technological advances, from the era of sub-sonic, cannon-armed fighters to supersonic, multi-role jets loaded with missiles, computers and radar. His skills and service were recognised with the awards of the Air Force Cross, the Queen's Commendation and the OBE.

Now living quietly in Buckinghamshire, he prefers to let historians decide how close East and West came to war. "At the sharp end all we were trying to do was be as best prepared as we could," he says. "In my youth I wanted to get involved in a hot war, and do all the things I'd been trained to.

"Looking back it doesn't matter at all. I'm glad I didn't,



"Bugs" during his heyday as a Cold War fighter pilot in 1959

quite frankly I'm glad I was never asked to kill anybody. Contrary to popular belief, just because people are in the armed services it doesn't mean you relish killing people."

When he was finally diagnosed as having ms, his

it was a great relief. But that was short-lived."

He stayed with the RAF and did staff work until he decided to retire. "I think the RAF handled it very well," he says. "They got their money's worth, but they didn't say: 'We have no further use for you.'"

In any case, he says it's in his nature to fight against his condition. "You play the cards you are dealt with. I like to think that my book might help other people with ms, that it might give them a boost and tell them that it's not the end of the world and that you can keep going."

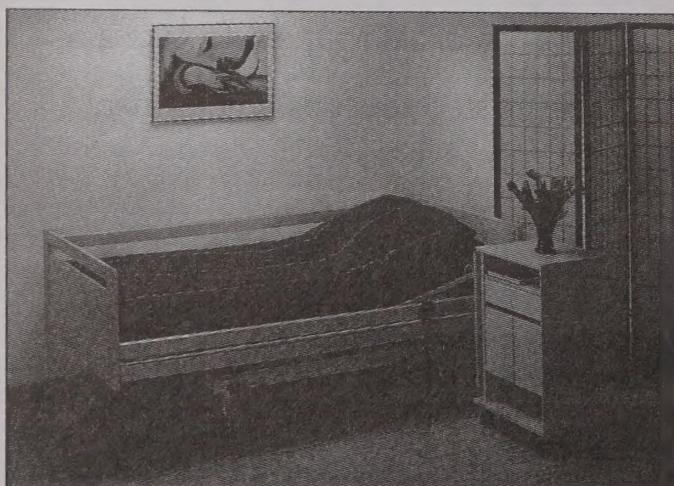
And the future? "One of the plans I have is not to write another book," he says smiling. "It's been jolly hard work."

Never In Anger by Anthony "Bugs" Bendell, Orion Books, £17.99 hardback.

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Collision course: Ruth Nunez (USA) (left) and Chantel Benoit (Canada) (right) collide during the women's final of the Energy Australia Gold Cup 98 World Wheelchair Basketball Championships



A stroke of success: Margaret McEleny (above) took gold in the 150m breaststroke at the International Paralympic Committee World Swimming Championships in New Zealand in October. The British BT-backed team failed to top the medal table, beaten by the Canadian squad who took 25 golds. Britain came second with 18 and France third with 13.

MARTIN JENKINSON

Basket battles

The British men's team began well with victories against Korea and Japan in the Energy Australia Gold Cup in Sydney writes Philip Craven.

Then it came up against a transformed Dutch team led by the mercurial Gert Jan van der Linden and went down 61-37. Great Britain (GB) finished 3rd, to play Australia in the quarter-final, a repeat of Atlanta.

Australia scored in the last seconds of the game and narrowly beat GB, 61-60. GB went on to beat Finland and Spain and secure 5th place.

The women's final proved close. At half-time the USA were leading 29-28 against Canada with a star performance from Ruth Nunez. In the second half, the combination of Chantel Benoit and Renee Del Colle proved too much for the USA and Canada ran away to a 54-38 victory.

In the men's final, veteran David Kiley burst onto the scene in the first half and scored 6 quick points.

The second half brought an inspired performance by Van der Linden but the USA hung on to win the gold medal 61-59.



Aiming high: David Kiley (USA) fights for basket drives between Dutch defenders Koen Jansens (left) and Gert van der Linden (right) in the men's final at the Energy Australia Gold Cup 98 Wheelchair Basketball Championships. van der Linden won "Most Valuable Player" but the USA took gold.

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Ways in among the mandarins

What are the job opportunities for disabled people in the Civil Service? Rod Hermeston finds things are improving a lot.

At an open day for disabled people in October the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) adopted new measures to improve job prospects for disabled people.

It has started using the Positive About Disabled People, "two ticks" symbol which among other things guarantees suitably qualified disabled people a job interview.

It is one of many steps the Government is taking to help disabled people to work in the Civil Service.

But Education and Employment Secretary, David Blunkett, admits that the Government could do more.

"We should set an example when we ask other employers to take steps to facilitate disabled people into work," he says.

So how do you get in?

Jobs are often advertised in both local and national newspapers and job centres.

The Civil Service also provides a free *Guide to Government Departments and*

Agencies for anyone interested in working within them.

As for efforts to employ disabled people, many departments carry the "two ticks" symbol and all have an equal opportunities policy.



Nick Goss: more work needed

Many also have special budgets to pay towards adjustments and the job assistance scheme Access to Work (ATW).

The Civil Service also runs a bursary scheme which backs existing disabled staff with

money and extra training if they have the potential to become senior managers.

And the Cabinet Office has linked up with the charity Workable to give disabled graduates and students paid placements within various Government departments, while it is also supporting a similar scheme with the National Autistic Society.

The requirement of a degree can be waived for disabled people applying for the Fast Stream, which trains people for middle management quickly. Up to 170 people enter each year and in 1997, 4.3 per cent were disabled.

Victoria Harrison, 23, from London who is visually impaired, has been on the Fast Stream at the FCO since 1997.

She was the first disabled person to benefit from the FCO dropping a rule that diplomatic staff should be able to be posted anywhere in the world.

"There will be countries where it will not be possible to send



Fast worker: Victoria Harrison will get her postings overseas

me. But it will not stop me from going overseas," she says.

Tracy McMurry, 34, who is deaf, is a junior manager at the Benefits Agency in Leeds.

She says: "I do the same job as any other person in my position, but they are very receptive to ways of working around a disability."

So disabled people seem to think that the Civil Service is a good employer.

And as for keeping staff on who have become disabled, departments claim to make every effort. But many do not have supporting statistics.

Departments are trying, says Nick Goss, education, training and employment officer at the

Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation.

"Some departments do better than others," he adds.

So the Government seems to be getting there – but it admits that it still has some way to go.

Fast Stream, tel: (01256) 383684. Closing date 6 January. National Autistic Society Prospects Employment Scheme, tel: 0171-903 3597. Workable, tel: 0171-222 1803 Guide to Government Departments, tel: 0117-982 1171.

*Within departments there may be exceptions to the answers given in the survey below. N/A = not available.

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Customs and Excise	Yes	2.2	0	0.9	1.4
Defence	Yes	3.9	1.3	2.6	4.6
Education and Employment	Yes	5.6	1.4	4.2	4.6
Environment, Transport and Regions	Yes	3.1	N/A	N/A	N/A
Foreign and Commonwealth Office	Yes	2.0	0.9	2.5	1.3
Home Office	Yes	2.0	0	0.7	1.8
Inland Revenue	Yes	4.0	2.5	3.2	3.6
Lord Chancellor's Department	Yes	2.6	0	2.0	2.2
Northern Ireland Office	No	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Scottish Office	No	1.5	0	0.3	0.8
Social Security	Yes	6.6	4.3	2.8	6.4
Trade and Industry	No	3.8	2.1	3.4	3.2
Welsh Office	Yes	3.9	1.4	5.0	4.2
					N/A

'James has never been happier'

Mary-Anne Rankin agonised about the future of her son – till she found the Adult Family Placement Scheme

"What will happen to James as an adult?" was a question I had mulled over with great concern since he was born with Down's syndrome. I had frantic bursts of research, increasing in urgency as he entered his teenage years.

Four years ago, when James left school at 19, I wrote about finding Lufton Manor College in Yeovil, Somerset, a Mencap college for young people with learning impairments (*DN*, May 1995). But there was nothing I could do about his long-term future until he left college – just collect boxes full of information on every type of residential placement and join loads of organisations through which I could identify even more opportunities.

The options available to James had changed over the years.

Having decided that it would not work for James to live with his father or me (we are divorced and a divided family is confusing for James), we wanted the next best thing.

For many of his school and college years, he had been too far away for spontaneous visits. It was important that James was closer to home. So out went 95 per cent of the boxes.

The residential homes I visited were often extremely nice, but they weren't really what we were looking for – and yet we were not aware of any other option. Until, that is, James' social worker mentioned the Adult Family Placement Scheme that exists in our area of Hampshire.

Funded through social services, the scheme had been piloted successfully and was in the process of expanding. Intrigued, we met the adult



No monopoly of attention: James (centre) with Martin, Heather, Gavin and Richard INSIGHT PHOTOGRAPHERS

family placement officer to find out more.

Adult placement provides accommodation for vulnerable adults in the homes of people living in the community, who are approved by social services.

The carers undertake to integrate each person into their household and provide appropriate help for an agreed fee. The social services department ensures that carers and users receive support and assistance. The carers manage their extended "family" member's day-to-day needs, enabling them to live as independently as possible.

We realised immediately that this was what we were looking for, and 18 months ago we struck gold when James began his adult family placement with Heather and Martin Reeves in Aldershot, Hampshire.

With this scheme, we feel that James' needs, and ours, are met perfectly. In fact, we have

another son who has also benefited from the scheme – although his needs, as someone with a serious depressive illness, are very different.

Heather and Martin Reeves are great fun and have the essential wicked sense of humour necessary for anyone living with our son. They also have young sons aged 11 and 13 who interact very well with James. A 58-year-old woman with a learning impairment also lives permanently with

them (I hope she has not heard James' description of her as "a very old lady"), and two other men with Down's syndrome spend half the week each with the family.

James attends the local day centre where his programme is full and varied, including going for bike rides on his own. He is also taking a computer course at Farnborough Tech.

He has had an interview with Workwise, Hampshire social services' employment agency

for people with learning disabilities, to discuss work experience. Having started this by stating vehemently that there was "no way" he was going to work, by the end of the discussion he was dead keen – as long as it was in a video or CD shop.

We feel he has never been happier or more settled. He proudly tells people that he now has three families.

For the first time in 12 years James is only 15 minutes away, and his father and I can be spontaneous about when we see him – and vice versa. He can take part in all family gatherings, join us on the spur of the moment for a weekend, meal or visit to the cinema, and we can easily get to his annual progress reviews.

He also has a regular pattern to his life (so very important to him) which is managed brilliantly by people who have chosen this lifestyle.

We are extremely fortunate to live in an area where this scheme is operating. We would certainly encourage its growth. We see it as the ultimate example of community care.

National Association of Adult Placement Services (NAAPS), tel: 0151-709 1200.

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Letters to the Editor



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Thomson is letting down disabled holidaymakers

My wife has shown me the news story "Prison's better" (DN, November).

We have just returned from a holiday in Majorca which was booked with Thomson Holidays through a local travel agent.

The travel agent told me that our hotel in Santa Ponsa was the only one on the island recommended by Thomson for wheelchair users.

Did the Bakers choose the resort and then get the hotel? I specified needs for a hotel, and took whichever resort it was in.

There does seem to be some discrepancy over the recommendations made by Thomson to two different wheelchair users. My specifications did not bring us the facilities we would have liked, but did ensure that our bathroom was accessible – just.

Discussions with other disabled holidaymakers using Thomson in the same hotel or the same resort came to a common conclusion: Thomson is not doing enough for their

wheelchair-using customers.

In our hotel there were upwards of 20 wheelchair users. The one small lift has room for a wheelchair plus carer. None of the bathrooms have wheel-in showers and there is no wheelchair toilet in any public area. On the plus side, all floors in public areas are level, buffet counters are at wheelchair height, and the front entry is ramped. Staff are helpful.

I agree that the Federation of Tour Operators should set up guidelines on assessing disabled access in resorts – and with some urgency. They could start by surveying disabled holidaymakers and holding the results on a central database which can be accessed by all travel agents.

Our holiday was also spoilt by the treatment we received travelling to and from the UK. Arrangements for boarding the aircraft and the selection of seats were very poor.

P Rodway
Billingham, Cleveland

Peugeot condones dealer charges

My son was granted high rates of DLA care and mobility components three years ago to last until his 16th birthday in January 2000. This means he now does not have three years left to get a replacement Motability car, and with the way the Government is trying to cut back, it's not certain he will after January 2000.

So we decided to buy the car we had hired on the scheme. We knew it had been looked after and serviced regularly.

The garage who supplied the car quoted us £4,300. Other Peugeot dealers in the same city quoted £4,550 and £4,100, based on the price from Peugeot Contract Hire (PCH) plus "administration charges".

So, if you want to buy your Motability car, shop around: you are entitled to purchase the car from any Motability dealer.

But why cannot the supplier, in this case PCH, not set a standard fee to be charged on purchase? A difference of £400 seems excessive. PCH told me that charges of up to £800 are made by some dealers, so although they know this goes on they are not doing anything to try to regulate it.

Geoffrey AJ Bonelle
Livingston, Edinburgh

Student diary

The union is hindering our access campaign

by Marigold Hope

Disabled access at Edinburgh University has come to the forefront in my final year. To my amazement, it hit the headlines in the student paper, which has shown little interest in disability issues since it was established over a century ago.

In October, the Labour Club invited the wheelchair-using MP, Anne Begg, to talk about women in politics, but were shocked and angry when they could not find an accessible venue for her. They told her she couldn't come, but then the chaplaincy centre cancelled a lunch and a venue was provided.

Anne Begg was also appalled by the incident and said the inaccessibility at Edinburgh University was criminal.

She talked about her experiences of being a wheelchair user – people talking over her head and moving her around like a puppet – and how, if she had started using a wheelchair earlier, she didn't think she would have got where she has.

There is a noticeable increase in disabled students. But most



societies, student union debates and meetings, and nightlife are out of bounds for students with mobility impairments.

Union buildings are the responsibility of Edinburgh University Students' Association (EUSA) and the university. Improvements are ongoing but very slow because the university allocates only a limited amount of money for disabled access. They have an adjustment plan drawn up for the main union building and are applying for lottery money.

The Labour Club has begun a campaign to make all union buildings accessible. Yet the EUSA has responded angrily, saying it makes them look bad.

It is disappointing and rather telling when the influential Students Union tries to hinder rather than help such a campaign.

Anne Begg has been a great help because her high profile has made more people sit up and listen, explain, and demand change. Maybe the EUSA will eventually follow suit.

Meanwhile, I'm taking a young writers course at the Traverse Theatre and helping to film a student musical, legs willing.

I've also reorganised my room – desk and computers included – sitting on my bottom!

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PC pulse

Come on, play the game

Among all the exciting stuff arriving at DN for the Christmas Special pages was a catalogue from Toys for the Handicapped, tth for short. While its contents pleased the eye, the name made the rest of the body wince. This has not been lost on the company, or why else would it use initials? Come on tth, play ball. Change that name.

Still marginalised

DN was happy to go to the *In from the Margins* conference, run by the National Youth Agency and others, which looked at young people's role in society. Disability to be one issue covered. Or that was the intention. As it was, the mikes at the disability workshop did not work and DN learned that the whole conference changed venue at the last minute because only then did the organisers realise their chosen venue wasn't accessible. So disability is still very much on the margins.

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'Tis the season

Put Christmas cares aside.
Dan Batten is here to lend a helping hand

Christmas looms large once again, a time to celebrate the birth of Christ, eat, drink, be merry...and wonder what on earth to buy Uncle Bob.

Unless a person's likes and dislikes are blatantly obvious, it can be a real nightmare trying to find the ideal gift. Fear not, DN is here to change the fumbling of festive gift choosing into pure present giving pleasure.

If you've fancied a mobile phone (*bottom*), but are put-off by big bills each month, maybe one of the new range of "pre-pay" phones is for you. Each of the four major mobile networks has a scheme where you pay for your calls and line rental in advance with vouchers. Packages, such as Vodafone *Pay as you Talk* (analogue), start from £79.99. Maybe a pager, from around £35, would suit you better. You'll find everything you need available from The Carphone Warehouse. Their free advice line, tel: 0800-925 925, can give you more information.

Is there a theatre buff in your midst? Why not treat them to a theatre token? They are valid at over 180 venues nationwide, including all of London's West End theatres. Call the Tokenline, tel: 0171-240 8800, and let your thespian friends enjoy anything from *The Bard to Barnum*.

If there's a budding Picasso trying to burst forth, an Art Videos production could be the key. Over 100 titles are available for artists of all levels. Subjects including watercolour painting and working with acrylics. Teaching Art, tel: (01949) 844050.

Children seem to enjoy Christmas the most, especially when wading through a mountain of toys. Tomy's Multi-Gym Walker (*top right*) will keep the young ones amused. It combines six toys in one pack-



age – a baby gym, activity centre, rattle and teether, baby stroller, activity table and shape sorter. It is suitable for children between three months and three years and sells for around £35 in good toy shops.

DN has ten to give away (*see Special offers on page 18*).

For kids with the computer bug, VTECH's Learning Pad (*top centre*) combines fun with education. The console plugs into a television set and provides a wide range of things to do, including maths problems with The Number Magician and language with The Amazing Word Pack software, which are supplied, along with drawing tools and a library of animated characters. It is suitable for 5-8 year olds, and retails at around £70. VTECH, tel: (01235) 555545.

The Toys for the Handicapped (tfh) catalogue could also be worth a look, with an array of toys such as bubble columns, ladder lights and fiendish puzzles. For a copy, contact tfh, tel: (01299) 827820.

The ROMPA Activity fitness

and health catalogue features aids to sensory stimulation, hydrotherapy and reminiscence therapy. You can also choose from games designed to help bring back those happy memories of youth. Freephone, tel: 0800-056 2323.

Anne Davies has some really practical present ideas. First up is the Baby Boa Constrictor (*right*). No, Anne has not brought back a dangerous souvenir from abroad, but has found a tool to end the nightmare of tricky-to-open jar lids and bottle tops. It can also be used to tighten lids back on,





to spend lolly



out needing muscles like Hercules. It's £5.95. To find your local stockist, tel: 0181-654 4077.

In domestic mode, Anne's next purchases were a Morphy Richards Curvy Kettle (£24.99) and a Two-Slice Cool Toaster (£23.99). The kettle is easy to use with a curved design, and the toaster, with its large slots, takes baps or thicker slices of bread. It helps by toasting the slices further out with a "high arch". Both are available in a range of bright colours from high street stores.

With your new kettle, the tea pot needs to be filled. If you're tired of Tetley's, take a trip to Whittard's. You'll find something that never tickles your taste buds from their extensive range. Tel: 0171-924



1888, to drain more information from the bag.

Want to smell and look good for that Christmas party? Beautician Vanessa Guinsberg has sniffed out a few suggestions. The Woodspirits UK range includes some exotic soaps with aromas such as amethyst-ultramarine lavender delight, bright orange citrus bar and creamy or traditional lavender. Prices from £3.50, tel: 0181-293 4949. She also recommends casting an eye over some glitzy false eyelashes, in a variety of eye-catching colours, or treating your lips to the same look with some glitter crayons, both available from Spectacular Cosmetics, tel:

0181-952 2323.

A range of handmade cosmetics are also available from Lush international. Their blizzard box contains festive bath "ballistics" to get you all of a lather, and a cornucopia of other cleansing items will keep you odour free. Order by 7 December to guarantee a Christmas delivery. Lush, tel: (01202) 668545.

After your night out you may just want to curl up in bed. Rob Jackson recommends snuggling up with a Hot Bot (top left). A safer alternative to scalding yourself with a hot water bottle, it contains treated cereal which heats up when microwaved. It can also be frozen, to soothe those aching party heads, and comes in a variety of designs. Available from Cat Out of the Bag, tel: (01753) 854800.

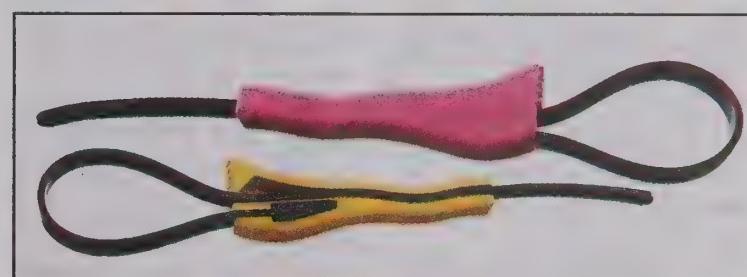
Alternatively, you could repair your battered body by pampering yourself with something from The Body Shop, such as the refreshing Tea Tree Oil products (above) or some

relaxing aromatherapy oils. Call customer services, tel: (01903) 731500.

DN's motoring correspondent David Griffiths has two suggestions to steer you on the right path. He recommends a device called a Traveller, a portable route planner which sits on your dashboard. It can give you the best route and journey time between your destination and starting point across Britain. £69.99 from leading motor accessory shops, or contact Sly Fox Products, tel: 0181-993 6008.

To stop your car battery drying up, try a solar powered battery charger. It works from natural light, needs no permanent connection and keeps your battery fully charged when not in use. £19.99 (inc. p&p) from Mobility Information Service, tel: (01743) 761889.

Hopefully, our odd idea will help you, and make you realise that 'tis the season to be jolly. Even if it does soak up most of your lolly.



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Get away from it all



After the hectic Christmas rush is over, you'll probably want to spend some time relaxing. Well, for one lucky reader, *DN* can help you out there.

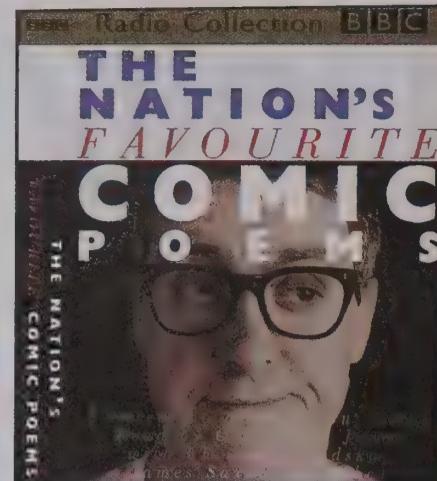
Thanks to The Southgate Hotel, Exeter, the winner can take a partner and stay in the historic city centre, overlooking the cathedral.

The weekend two-night break, worth £220, includes breakfast on both mornings and dinner on one evening.

The hotel is highly commended (four-crowns) by the English Tourist Board and registered four-star with the AA. There

are three specially adapted bedrooms for wheelchair users on the ground floor, with grab rails, alarms and direct phone contact to reception, each with accessible ensuite bathroom. A sloped kerb leads from the carpark to the front entrance, and there are no steps into or around the hotel. A lift gives access to all floors. The hotel also has an indoor pool with steps rather than a ladder.

If you don't win, but still fancy staying, write to The Southgate Hotel, Southernay East, Exeter EX1 1QF, tel: (01392) 412812.



It's fully booked up

One great idea for a Christmas present, or for yourself, is the cassette story.

Thanks to BBC Worldwide, we have two new releases up for grabs. There are six copies of *The Nation's Favourite Comic Poems*, worth £14.98 each, and two Alan Bennett box set collections, containing *Talking Heads 2* (video, book and cassette), *Alan Bennett at the Beeb* (cassette) and *Alan Bennett Children's Library* (cassette), worth £60.95 each.

The comic poems selection, some of which is read by Griff Rhys Jones, covers a whole range of humorous verse. Hear nonsense rhymes by Hilaire

Belloc, witty verse from Victoria Wood and comic observation courtesy of Benjamin Zephaniah.

There's Lewis Carroll's *Jabberwocky*, Edward Lear's *The Owl and the Pussycat*, and Spike Milligan's *On the Ning Nang Nong*.

Talking Heads 2 is the second collection of Alan Bennett's "individual portraits", performed by six of Britain's leading actors over the last few weeks on the BBC.

It includes *Miss Fozzard Finds Her Feet* (Patricia Routledge), *The Outside Dog* (Julie Waters) and *Waiting for the Telegram* (Thora Hird).

The *Children's Library* has Alan Bennett reading some of the all-time classics, such as *Winnie the Pooh*, *The Wind in the Willows*, and *Alice in Wonderland*.

At the BBC is a three-hour collection of extracts from Alan Bennett's plays, diaries and tributes to friends, selected by the man himself.

Comic Poems: ISBN 0563 558504.

Alan Bennett Talking Heads 2: ISBN 0563 558946.

Alan Bennett's Children's Library: ISBN 0563 558954.

Alan Bennett at the BBC: ISBN 0563 557532.

As featured on pages 16 and 17, *DN* has 10 Tomy Multi-Gym Walkers, worth £35 each, to give away. Ideal for kids aged three months to three years, this six toys-in-one will keep the children amused for hours. For your chance to win, follow the instructions at the bottom of the page.



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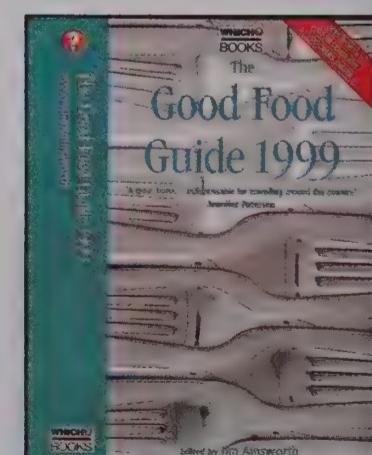
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Food, glorious food

If all the good food of Christmas has your taste buds tingling, you'll want one of our six copies of *The Good Food Guide 1999* from Which? Books.

This comprehensive guide, in its 47th year, lists some 1,300 of the UK's best restaurants, cafés, pubs and other eateries.

It describes the food and wine served, ambience, decor and service, as well as opening times, prices, smoking policy, and children's service. Places are listed by cuisine, budget eating and vegetarian cooking. There's also information on wheelchair access, where places conform to guidelines by the



Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation.

ISBN 085202 7176.

To enter these offers, send your name and address on a postcard marked Exeter, Tomy, Alan Bennett, Comic Poems or Good Food, to: *DN*, 6 Market Road, London N7 9PW. Closing date 4 January 1999. Offers not open to *DN* staff or associates. UK entrants only. Cash equivalents not available on any prize.

Film

Michael Turner



Any film that has the epitaph to its disabled heroine, "our lives are easier than yours, but they will never be so full", just has to be sentimental tosh.

Sadly, this isn't the end of a 1950s Joan Crawford film. It is *The Theory of Flight*, the latest BBC Films offering at the London Film Festival.

It tells of the relationship between Jane (Helena Bonham Carter), who has motor neurone disease, and Richard (Kenneth Branagh), who enters her life as a convicted criminal giving respite care as part of his community service.

Jane is a hugely unoriginal – a rebellious "supercrip", who delights in shop lifting and embarrassing her carers. She frequently uses expletives, and the audience at the National Film Theatre seemed to find it amusing that a character with a speech impairment could swear.

She is also fixated on having a sexual relationship, and enlists Richard's help in running off to London in search of a man. After visiting dating and advice agencies, they end up at a club for disabled people, where Jane is horrified at the idea of having sex with another disabled person.

This is where the film becomes offensive. It uses disabled actors – yet they are dismissed by Jane as hideous freaks and filmed to emphasise this point of view.

Here is the real danger of using high-profile actors as disabled people – they create an acceptable face of disability. In *The Theory of Flight*, real disabled people are rejected.



ALEXIS HUTSON
The Interplay Theatre Trust, which produces accessible theatre for young people with learning disabilities, has been performing the award winning *Stepping Stones* with Sarah Beauviosin (above), a recently graduated deaf actress.

Interplay Theatre Trust, Leeds LS12 3LE, tel: 0113-263 8556.



Listen carefully: Nabil Shaban (right) in Salman Rushdie's *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* STEPHEN VAUGHAN

Shaban sets sail as a star

The problem with children's theatre, in my view, is the kids. However, it was well worth tackling the crowd at the Royal National Theatre's Cottesloe for the momentous experience of seeing a disabled actor perform there for the first time.

Nabil Shaban plays Rashid Khalifa in this adaptation of *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* by Salman Rushdie, and gives a fine performance as the story-telling father of the eponymous Haroun.

Nabil has often played villainous types, (notably Sil in

Dr Who) and it is good to see him make a success of an affable, somewhat feckless, character.

When disabled actors are cast as characters with no reference to disability it is often in drama with a mythic or fantasy dimension. *Haroun* is a fairy tale and fable with a smattering of science fiction, so perhaps it's not the boldest casting decision, but it's a start.

It's a niggle, but another point about not acknowledging disability is that his character was able to get on a bus, wheelchair and all, without any

difficulty or comment. I know it's theatre and we can't be forever banging on about access, but if only real life was that easy! The bus scene is very funny though and a good example of Nabil's movement on the stage being in no way limited by the director.

Although disabled people are almost never seen on the mainstream stage, the audience took the presence of Nabil in its stride. This certainly is a triumph in the struggle for the recognition of disabled actors.

Sian Vasey

IF YOU

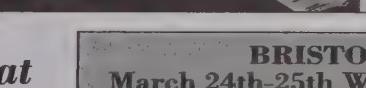
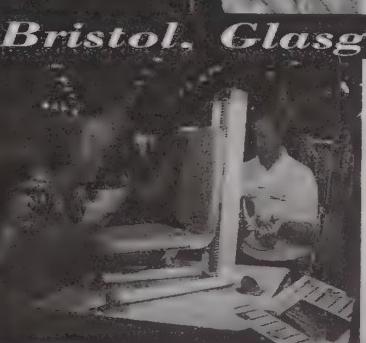
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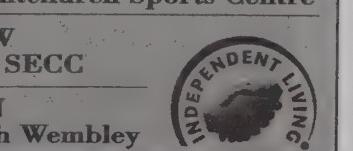
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Television

Paul Darke



During Armistice week, disability was prevalent on tv. Channel 4's *Sounds like Sunlight* (7 November) about blind veterans, and *Shell Shock* (8 November) about war trauma/mental illness, being typical. There were also three other documentaries that focused on disability: *Heart of Darkness* and *Heart of the Matter – One Brief Life* (both BBC1, 25 October); and *Horizon: Thalidomide – a Necessary Evil* (BBC2, 29 October).

Heart of Darkness explored the rise of white supremacy groups in Texas. The problem was that it used a victim of one such group – a black disabled man – to show that these groups are out of control and a threat to democracy. It seemed to imply that killing able-bodied people wouldn't have been so bad.

Heart of the Matter, in contrast, told the moving story of the short life of "Baby L", who was born severely disabled, and how her parents did all they could to keep her alive. They were finally defeated by Baby L's doctors successfully appealing to the courts to terminate her life. More a case of "hearts of darkness". I hate such programmes because they cannot fail to move you, given their subject matter, no matter how well (*Heart of the Matter*) or poorly they are made.

Horizon: Thalidomide, somewhat disturbingly, was unfocused and failed to deal with the questions it raised. It left me feeling it was little more than a promo-film for the imminent re-introduction of the dreaded drug thalidomide into the UK prescription system.

Late night ITV offered up a ridiculous tale of Siamese twins, *Tales from the Crypt: My Brother's Keeper* (29 October). The plot had one twin wanting to separate and the other not, making it an entertaining piece of *Tales of the Unexpected*-style drama that sent me to bed cheerful.

Early evening BBC2 gave us the equally ridiculous *Sliders: State of the A.R.T.* (4 November), an entertaining plot about a mad wheelchair using scientist who wiped out humanity only to replace it with human-like robots who called him "Father". *Sliders*, I think, is the best of this kind of US imported tv available now, and this episode was no exception.

No need for an oil well in the garden

DN's David Griffiths reports from Britain's biggest-ever Motor Show

The problem with a theme is that eventually you risk repetition. Take the latest Jaguar, hailed as one of the brightest stars in cars to come. Viewed from afar, you could swear the designer had been inspired by a key player in the TV series *The Sweeney*. I still think it looks awfully like a 1962 2.8 with fancy lights, but now with four litres, and faster.

Four years ago the car of the future was higher, bigger and a people carrier. Ford, Volkswagen, Citroen, Fiat, Honda, Chrysler were all offering people movers with high level seating, big carrying capacity and, regrettably, a thirst to match. They can often be misleading in their level of usefulness when called upon to carry disabled travellers, being neither as roomy nor as accessible as they appear to be at first glance.

One of the first impressions I had when visiting the 1998 British Motor Show in October was just how quickly fashion can change. People carriers were largely absent, and when they were there they appeared discretely tucked away in the darkest corners.

In their place were smaller

cars with high level seating and an ability to save on fuel.

This new breed offers excellent potential for people with disabilities who have problems rising from a seated position and find lower saloon cars difficult to get in and out of, but who do not have an oil well at the bottom of the garden or a family of seven children.



Ford Focus: power-assisted steering, and "has the edge for looks"

The Daihatsu Move started it all. Quirky, and resembling a fairground ride, it now appears in a revamped form, along with the bigger and more attractive Grand Move. Both come with automatic transmission options.

Joining this new breed of easy-access for the stiff-knee driver and passenger is the Hyundai Atoz. Although looking very similar to its rivals, it offers unrivalled



Toyota's Yaris: "Possibly the most user-friendly three-door ever"

wide doors, economy (around 50mpg) and a range of creature comforts, including power steering and automatic transmission. It looks attractive too – no fairground ride styling here. Daihatsu freephone, tel: 0800-618 618.

For those who like the latest models but prefer a more traditional approach, there were a trio of three-door hatchbacks for wheelchair users and those needing easy access. The Ford Focus, the new Vauxhall Astra and the Toyota Yaris are destined to become mainstream choices.

There is little to choose between the Focus and the new Astra. They both have a wide range of options, including 4-speed automatic transmission, light power steering, roomy storage in the rear, and power-assisted steering.

The Focus has the edge for

versatility, with a host of features and options, including manual, semi-automatic or fully-automatic transmission. Nicely finished, amazingly airy and incredibly frugal, it should win many friends. Freephone, tel: 0800-981 981.

The new Cuore from Daihatsu can do for the independent wheelchair user what the Atoz can do for the ambulant disabled user. It offers easy access through two

looks, perhaps, but they are both attractive, practical and nicely appointed. Access is via wide opening doors with reasonable headroom, and the facias are functional and have easy-to-use controls. Ford, freephone, tel: 0800-240 241. Vauxhall Motability, tel: (01582) 861888.

Yaris is something else. Possibly the most user-friendly three-door ever, with a

'All the stands offered access for wheelchairs and some had rails too'

cavernous door, adjustable rear seats which slide forward when you need more luggage space, it has the usual Toyota quality and reliability too. See it in your Toyota showroom soon, or, better still, see all three before making a choice.

Toyota, tel: (01737) 768585.

With eight halls of the NEC in Birmingham crammed with vehicles, this year's Motor Show really was the biggest – I know because for the first time my powerchair didn't make it to every stand.

But bigger does not necessarily mean more exciting or rewarding. Good as it was, I came away from the show somewhat at a loss as to where all this might be leading.

On the positive side, all the stands offered access for wheelchairs and some had rails too. Jaguar's efforts in this respect deserve praise, as did the Ford stand, and it is nice to see a platform lift now in operation as an alternative to those huge ramps which lead up from the foyer to the main exhibition halls.

Regrettably, the sheer size of the place does mean it can be tiring – even if you manage to get your vehicle into the coded parking area for disabled people.

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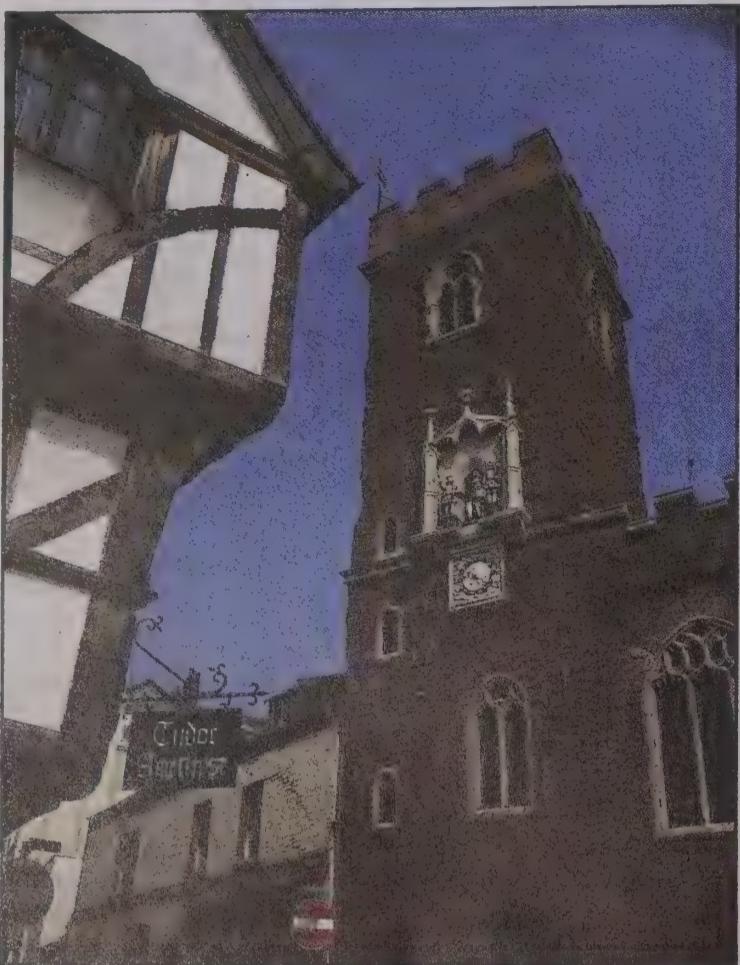
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Doors to Devon

Exeter is finally opening up to disability issues, finds Lisa Hitchen, but it's been a long, hard slog



Ancient history: Exeter has all the access problems of an old city but fortunately does not have many cobbled streets or alleys

Exeter was once dubbed one of the most wheelchair-unfriendly cities in Britain by the local press, a taxi driver told me.

Ten years ago this might well have been true. Today, through

campaigning efforts, disabled Exonians and their carers admit progress has been made.

In large part this is due to a one-woman crusade by Maureen Richards, the city's

disability development officer for the last eight years.

Mrs Richards' post is not funded by the city council, as it might have been elsewhere, but by the more enlightened health and social services.

Her efforts were driven by a personal motive – to secure the independence of her disabled son, Matthew. She set up the parent action group DRIVE or the Disabled Rights to Individual Values and Equality, which led to the opening of John Hannam House in 1990 named after the MP, a group of flats for disabled and elderly people to live independently and a day centre for young adults to learn new skills. She told DN: "Before the centre there was nothing in the city. We were just desperate."

Matthew now has his own flat and as his mother proudly admits, "does not need me anymore".

She is still working hard to ensure the decision makers in this Roman city continue to address the needs of its disabled residents and visitors.

Together with the city council's access officer, Alan Stokes, she is hoping to set up a system of talking signs in the city's shopping centres for blind and visually impaired people. If



Waterworks: exercise classes at the Pyramids Leisure Centre

the scheme gets the go ahead it will put Exeter ahead of many other cities. Mr Stokes said: "There is a need for this as there is nothing in Exeter for visually impaired people."

Another major scheme is to redevelop Princesshay, one of the city's main shopping areas. The plans are going through consultation. If they happen it will mean more accessible



Driving force: Exeter's disability officer Maureen Richards

shops and a possible re-positioning of the city's Shopmobility scheme.

Not everyone is in favour of the changes. Many fear plans

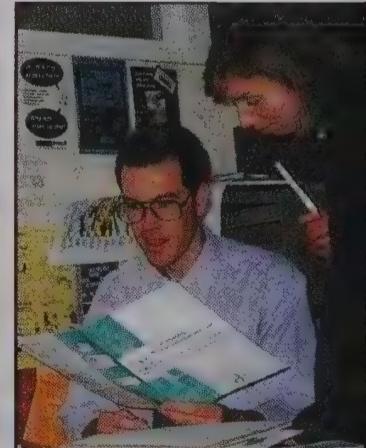
for a new car park as part of the scheme would mean more cars in the city centre.

For disabled people this might be a good thing. Many buses are still inaccessible and taxis are also a problem. Only nine out of forty-one of the Hackney cabs are wheelchair accessible. Many cabbies don't want the expense of change so the Hackney Carriage Trade Association has requested that the local authority applies for exemption from the Disability Discrimination Act. This has met with angry opposition from disability groups.

There is more positive news on local attractions. Exeter Arts Centre is being made accessible with a £2m development scheme. After advice from a group of disabled users, the venue will provide lifts, ramped access and lowered counters when it reopens in February next year.

A partnership approach between North and East Devon Health Authority and social services to empower people with learning disabilities, mental health problems and the city's carers, is another plus.

Peter Vance, a self-advocacy worker for Exeter Council for Voluntary Service (CVS) has



Peter Vance and Charlotte Hubbard of the Exeter CVS

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(D.O.B. 30.3.89)



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Patrick has myotonic dystrophy, a condition which shows itself with muscle weakness, and may be progressive. For Patrick this means he is unable to smile or show other facial expressions. Currently Patrick is fit and healthy, and enjoys an active life although he can tire easily.

Patrick has recently moved to a special day school where he has settled well and made good relationships with his class mates and the staff. His social worker has known Patrick since he was 18 months old and speaks very fondly of him.

Patrick is of white Irish/English parentage and needs a carer/s who will look after him beyond his 18th birthday. He responds well to one-to-one attention and supervision, and would flourish in a family who have time and energy to help him develop further.

We are committed to maintaining contact between Patrick, his two older sisters and his birth parents, who are supportive of the plan for Patrick. A fostering allowance and on-going social work support will be available.

For more information on Patrick or on myotonic dystrophy, please contact Bhopinder Nijjar, Social Worker, Adoption and Permanency Team, Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, 2 Allen Street, London W8 6BH, tel: 0171-937 7290.

used his skills to make the county council's document on transport facilities for disabled people, *Getting Around More Easily*, more accessible for people with learning disabilities. He said: "The spin-off is that our work helps carers to understand the issues too." It looks like Exeter is opening its doors to change at last.

Exeter – exasperating or excellent?

Getting there

By train, you'll arrive at Exeter St Davids, tel: 0345-413 775 which has a lift to all platforms. For community transport, try Exeter Disability Transport Service, tel: (01392) 464206 but book in advance.

For taxis, Les's Taxis, tel: 0411-109 211 which has wheelchair accessible cabs.

Where to stay

Exeter does not have many hotels that are accessible. One of the better ones is the newly built Southgate Hotel in the city centre, tel: (01392) 412812, which has three accessible double rooms with ensuite facilities, disabled parking, level access to the restaurant, bar,



A new stair lift at the Royal Albert Memorial Museum

healthclub and swimming pool (unfortunately this has no hoist). The accessible rooms interconnect with standard rooms for carers and all 110 rooms have tactile numbers on the doors. From £79 per person, per night.

Call in advance to check accommodation is suitable for your needs.

Entertainment

Start your day with a tour of the city provided free by Exeter City Council's Redcoat Guides, tel: (01392) 278100. These walking tours run Monday-Saturday, November-March.

Check out the astronomical clock in Exeter Cathedral, tel: (01392) 214219, which has wheelchair access at the main entrance at the west end, access to the choir area, refectory and shop. There is no disabled parking and no signed tours.

The Northcott Theatre, tel: (01392) 493493 has performances of *Dick Whittington*, 9 December-16 January, 1999, some of which are audio-described and have sign language interpretation.

Jazz Jamaica are in town on 4 December at St. George's Hall. Call the Exeter Arts Centre, tel: (01392) 219741 to check access.

Where to eat and drink

Exeter does not score highly here. I called five restaurants

and cafés – none had level access to both eating area and toilets and their staff could not come up with many accessible places to indulge in a banquet or grab a bite.

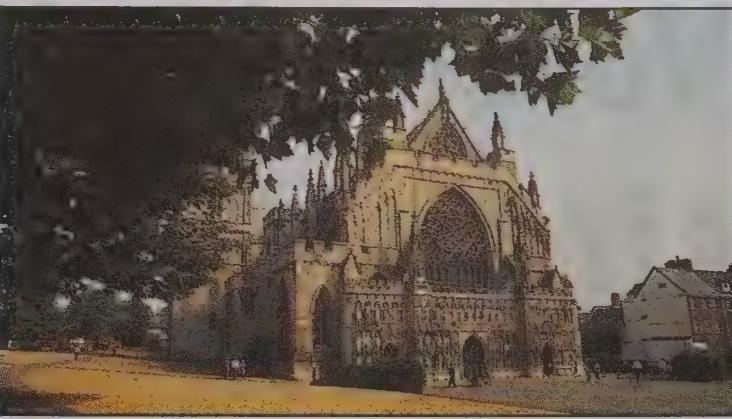
For pizza or pasta, try On the Waterfront, tel: (01392) 210590. On the outskirts of town is The Heart of Oak, tel: (01392) 467329. Both are accessible and welcome guide dogs.

Shopping

The Guildhall Shopping Centre has level access and a lift.

For Shopmobility, tel: (01392) 494001. Park in King William Street car park. From here you can access the shops on Sidwell Street and the High Street.

For more unusual seasonal gifts try the quirky shops of Gandy Street, although access might be more difficult.



Cash for access: Exeter's 850-year-old cathedral is hoping for lottery money to improve facilities for visitors with disabilities

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Voices in the high street disappoint

Janet Larcher found new voice input systems a real challenge

Voice input computer systems are "flavour of the month", particularly among people with physical or literacy disabilities. It is assumed that talking to the computer is easier than typing, and if you can say words the computer will recognise them, so there's no need to be able to spell.

If only life were that simple. I have just spent a rainy weekend trying out two computer voice recognition systems. They are inexpensive (£49.99) versions of existing programs, now available through high street suppliers.

Word-by-word v continuous

There are two types of program. The original one requires you...to...speak...each...word...one...at...a...time. If the computer doesn't recognise what you have said, you correct the computer's understanding of the word just spoken before dictating the next one.

This word-by-word program is successfully used by many people with disabilities and is still the only one that can be used hands free – essential for someone with cerebral palsy or a similar condition which makes typing or mouse control

very difficult.

The other voice recognition system – and the two I tried were of this type – allow the user to speak continuously and therefore more naturally into the computer.

How they work

No voice controlled computer system will instantaneously recognise all voices. They require training, and some require more training than others.

But no matter how much you have trained the system, none of them correctly recognises all your speech all the time. You must correct all mistakes, otherwise the computer remembers the sound you made and how it was interpreted, and will reproduce the wrong word next time you make that set of sounds.

All corrections on the word-by-word system can be made by voice, but with continuous speech you must be able to use a keyboard and a mouse or trackball.

Both the continuous speech systems I used come on a CDROM and give plenty of on-screen instructions to lead you through the set-up process. You

need to wear a lightweight, pilot-type, headset and have the microphone to the side of your lips so that your breathing does not confuse speech recognition.

Each program comes with its own microphone. I could not get the Via Voice Home System (VV) microphone to work with my voice and computer. After being told 10 times by the computer that I had failed, I gave up and used the Dragon Dictate Point and Speak (DD) microphone with the VV software and then everything worked well. In any case, the DD microphone looks more robust and was more comfortable.

The DD system requires you to read to the computer for half-an-hour from *A Space Odyssey*, *Alice in Wonderland* or *Dave Barry in Cyberspace*. Not easy for a poor reader, and you must read each paragraph with no (well, few!) stumbles.

For the VV system you have to read a collection of individual sentences. A poor reader could have them read out and then repeat them from memory.

You can start using the VV system after training with a few words, though it recommends



Margie masters it: Margie Woodward, who has CP, has been using Dragon Dictate's Power Secretary, a word-by-word recognition system, on her Mac laptop for a year. As training adviser and disability specialist at Scope she travels a lot, and now she can dictate reports, e-mails or training plans anywhere. "With my speech impairment, it has taken longer to train and there was a stage when I would have dropped it out of a window! It still doesn't do simple words like 'the' or 'a', but it's much easier than typing. I think more work needs to be done to improve word recognition."

the full half-hour session.

I used VV with the minimum of training and then set myself up as a new user and did the full training. I found there was little difference in the number of mistakes it made. VV comes with its own word processor, Speakpad, within which its accuracy and typing speed is better than in Microsoft Word.

Dictate and wait

The continuous speech input has a strange delay between you speaking the words and then seeing them on the screen. I found it impossible to look at the screen while dictating.

I dictated the same 95 word paragraph in both systems and found it took DD two minutes after I finished to complete the writing on the screen, whereas VV needed only 35 seconds.

On another occasion I finished reading a paragraph and found nothing had appeared on the screen at all. Only the whirring of the computer convinced me to wait. What it produced was impressive, but there were enough mistakes for it to be nonsense to a recipient – "violently" not "finally", "it looked" not "we look", and "issues" not "this year's".

I used a 200MHz Pentium computer with 32mb RAM. A faster computer (ideally with 64 or 128mb RAM) would give faster output from both systems.

Verdict

Overall, I found these continuous speech input systems much slower than using a keyboard. I also found that creating and dictating text is a new skill.

If you have a physical disability, can manage the keyboard and mouse or trackball for corrections, have good speech and are well motivated to beat the voice input system into submission, you will be successful. But for others, it will be difficult.

More expensive versions of these systems provide extra features, making them easier to use. It would be better to discuss your needs with a specialist supplier, eg iANSYST, than buying from a high street shop.

iANSYST, tel: (01223) 420101
Dr Janet Larcher is a consultant in microtechnology aids for disabled people. Next month she looks at programs for people with dyslexia.

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Ups and downs of Dan Batten's month

Last month was a mixed bag. From hilarity through to abject misery, the full range of the human experience was felt. Not being a selfish guy, I made certain that all tribulations were shared with Batten's brigade.

First of all, halfway down Oxford Street with Jon, happily shopping for assorted rubbish, disaster strikes. I suddenly collapse in a heap, screaming and turning West London's grey skies blue. The knee has gone again. A problem I've had for years, where said joint leaves its socket, leaving me with the

Candid Dan dids

misery of watching daytime television for a week. Jon has the nice job of popping knee back. Buddha (flatmate) is nice, and takes two days off to look after me. Privacy thresholds are dissolving.

Friends also seem to be deserting me for different parts of the country. Waving Jo and her parents off to their new home in Devon was as joyful as the Radiohead back catalogue, but potential free holidays numb the pain. Ivan and family are off. I'm seriously concerned about my choice of soap.

All has not been doom and gloom, though. The Astoria was

invaded by rock band Anthrax, three friends, myself, and 2,000 others. Mayhem ensued, catapulting us back to college days, where shouting along to *Bring The Noise* and emptying cans at an horrific rate was the norm. Ditto Ian's birthday, sans band. Wonderful evenings, and with Christmas coming up many more are due, including New Year with Windsor in Leeds, and a return to the fold on the Day. I can't be bothered with prezies after my marathon search for them in this month's issue. Being a slob for two weeks will do, as will two weeks with loved ones.

Your stars



By DN's astrologer Marion Stanton

Your current projects will still be there in the New Year.

PISCES (20 Feb-20 March)

Good fortune smiles, but challenges loom. Those close to you want attention and associates are relying on you. Stand firm – you call the shots.

ARIES (21 Mar-20 Apr)

Communication is your key to success. Discuss your plans with others or expect friction.

You have some far-reaching plans but you will get further by involving others.

TAURUS (21 Apr-21 May)

Don't let the tension of arrang-

ing Christmas get you down. Someone out there wants to lend a hand, if you'd just let them. Take the help on offer.

GEMINI (22 May-22 June)

"Out of sorts" could be your current catch phrase. Don't let it lead you into arguments just when you most need support. The world is not on your shoulders – others are there for you.

CANCER (23 June-23 July)

Work is needed to avoid arguments with loved ones. Don't take on too much; you'll end up resentful and unappreciated. Keep festivities quiet. Let others organise for a change.

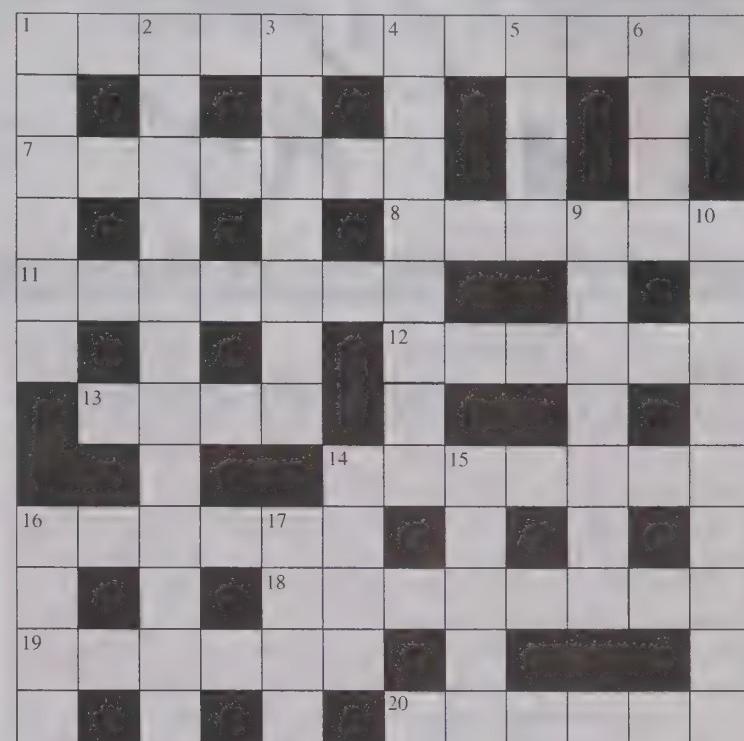
LEO (24 July-23 Aug)

Friendship is very important, especially now. You need your friends near and they'll appreciate your efforts. Enjoy a lav-

DN's crossword

Answers on page 27

COMPILED BY REBECCA REYNOLDS



ACROSS

- 1,7. Illness of the nervous system (5,7,7)
- 8. Noisy speaker (6)
- 11. Meeting (after separation) (7)
- 12. Owing money (2,4)
- 13. Desire strongly (4)
- 14. Like a song (7)
- 16. Spanish swordblade (6)
- 18. Behind closed doors (2,6)
- 19. Force someone to act (6)
- 20. Horse house (6)

DOWN

- 1. Up-to-date (6)
- 2. Uses foil site (anag) – elaborate deceit
- 3. Sermon text (7)
- 4. Tie entry (anag)
- 5. Falling water (4)
- 6. Facial feature (4)
- 9. Sugary substance (7)
- 10. Tea retail (anag)
- 14. Solo (4)
- 16. Blood-sucking insect (4)
- 17. Small gambling cubes (4)

What's in DN next month?



HOLIDAYS (Part 1)

Don't let cruising be bruising.

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Destroyed by crash

I am being driven to distraction by a sexual problem. As a recently married young woman I was involved in a horrific road accident in which my husband died. I am now paraplegic.

The man who caused the accident walked free. I always believed truth and right conquers all, but the judicial system in this country really shocked me. Perhaps I was naïve, but I've been treated so badly I want to die. It feels like rape.

Sexually, although some feeling has returned in the genital area, I feel frustrated as I can only go so far. I also feel guilt for my dead husband. I can see no way out but to join him.

Kate, Surrey

Despite your horrific experience, your resilience shines through. But a bit of personal advice, I am sure, would not come amiss.

I recommend you contact the Spinal Injuries Association (SIA). It has built up a reputation for providing a wide range of services for spinal cord injured (SCI) people. For instance, it provides an excellent peer-counselling service run by members who have experienced spinal injury themselves. You would find that these trained counsellors certainly understand the sexual problems you are experiencing.

SIA also has links with solicitors who have knowledge of the legalities surrounding the needs of SCI people.

As an SIA member you would get plenty of information. But I am sure the comradeship you would also get would help you build up your life. It would be a tribute to your husband if you rebuilt it based on the happiness you shared.

Spinal Injuries Association, 78 St James's Lane, London N10 3DF. Tel: 0181-444 2121; counselling line: 0181-883 4296.

I'm shorter – that's all. Some two-and-a-half years ago I had neurosurgery in the lower spine and now get chronic pain when on both feet. So a wheelchair entered my life. I am now, both mentally and physically, reduced to – I don't know what.

I can't help wondering whether, before this took place, I was as selfish and ignorant as the public seems to me now.

I'm not too angry with my lot, but for crying out loud will someone please inform the population that I, like your readers, am not a freak. I am just shorter than I once was now I'm on wheels.

John, Northamptonshire

Wheelchair users of the world unite! Come on, all you height discriminators, you heard the man. How about having a "Respect for wheelchair users' day"? I really mean it.

Let's also make a vow that in the future any low life who ignores us will have their toes run over.

Help for an abuse survivor
When I was younger I was abused. I have tried but cannot

A UNIQUE SERVICE

DN's telephone counsellor Lin Berwick can give disabled people and carers advice and support on personal and spiritual problems. Disabled herself, Lin is a psycho-therapeutic counsellor, Methodist local preacher and has gained a postgraduate diploma in homeopathic medicine. Talk to her on (01787) 882111 on Thursdays 1pm-5pm and Mondays 6pm-10pm.



£2,000 to put them right, even with me being on benefits. Is that right?

Joy, Gloucestershire

It certainly seems unfair, but only wealthy people seem able to afford expensive dentistry. The NHS is not at all keen to pick up the tab for the rest of us out there.

In order for a dentist to undertake major work he or she will need to apply for funding from the NHS. The work would have to be necessary for your dental health, and not just wanted for cosmetic reasons.

Your requirements may, in any case, require not a dentist but an orthodontist – someone who is trained to correct teeth which do not align when jaws are brought together.

It would be up to your dentist to consider a referral to an orthodontist, and it would still be necessary for this specialist to apply for NHS funding.

For further information you may like to contact the Word of Mouth dental helpline.

Still searching (a year on)

I put an ad in my local paper saying I was disabled and would like to meet a man or woman aged 57 to 63 years for friendship. A year later I have still not met anyone.

Harry, Hertfordshire

Don't give up, but keep trying. How about putting an ad in DN? If you advertise again, you need to try different forms of wording. Try using some of the wording from other ads.

It was only recently that I had a letter from a reader saying she had met a wonderful friend, but she admitted it had taken a couple of years.

Gloucestershire Rape Crisis Centre, open Mon, Tue, Wed and Fri 7.30-8.30pm; Thu 11.30am-12.30pm, tel: (01452) 526770.

Telephone Helplines Directory 1998 is available for £12 from Resource Information Service, The Basement, 38 Great Pulteney Street, London W1R 3DE, tel: 0171-494 2408. Health Information Service, tel: 0800-665 544.

Word of Mouth dental helpline, tel: 0645-551 188.



January
Lead story
Welcoming the new disability rights task force and employment review.

Features 7-page holidays special. Profile: Dr Amir Majid, the UK's second blind judge.



February
Lead story
Voicing concerns over Government plans to slash disabled people's benefits.

Features Christianity and disability. Firdaus Kanga profile. Holidays special.



March
Lead story
DDA first: people with learning disabilities win landmark decision.

Features Leeds city focus. Job seeker: a change of direction. Making bathrooms accessible.

1998 and all that

Back issues cost £1. Send an SAE to DN, address on page 2, stating the issue. We will send photocopies of issues that are out of print. You can read all the articles from back issues on our website at <http://www.disabilitynow.org.uk>



April
Lead story
Wheelchair voucher scheme threat from staff shortages and poor planning.

Features The Ideal Home Exhibition. Accessible walks in the New Forest. Fashion: does mail order work?



June
Lead story
Employment Appeal Tribunal victory prompts hope of more appeals.

Features Devolution news focus. Worries over continence provision. London Marathon report. Coventry city focus.



August
Lead story
New jobs for disabled people from 10 projects of the New Deal.

Features Three pages of Naidex coverage. Sheffield city focus. What pension is best? Disability broadcasting.



October
Lead story
Calls for Viagra to be available to disabled people after current NHS ban.

Features Working for a disability charity. Taking on the gym. Birmingham Motor Show. Margaret Hodge profile.



May
Lead story
Children from better off families get special education help more easily.

Features Chelsea Flower Show supplement. Prison investigation. Disabled actors in *The Unknown Soldier*.



July
Lead story
Future fears as European Union funding is cut following a court action.

Features Can phone banking help? 50 years of the Disabled Drivers' Association. What has the DDA achieved?



September
Lead story
Motability contract hire scheme under threat as Ford proposes pulling out.

Features Making playtime practical. Fashion for tots. Coping with grief. How to get going on the internet.



November
Lead story
Former doctor fights the BMA despite warnings the DDA doesn't cover his case.

Features 30 years of the All-Party Disablement Group. Assistance dog owners call for better rights.

What's on

Tower Hamlets's Coalition of Disabled People will host an International day of Disabled People, London, 3 December, 1-8pm. To promote the borough's commitment to disability rights, awareness raising and information sharing. Speakers, stalls, entertainment. Sign language interpreters. Eddie Lynch, tel: 0181-980 4300 (voice/minicom).

The Royal Society of Medicine's Forum on Learning Disability hosts Autistic Disorders in People with Learning Disability - Diagnosis and Management, London, 3 December. Includes approaches to intervention and adaptation of the educational

curriculum. Lisa Spicer, Academic Administrator, Royal Society of Medicine, 1 Wimpole Street, London W1M 8AE, tel: 0171-290 2988.

Beaumont Faith Group (of Beaumont College - run by Scope) are holding an Advent Event, Lancaster, 5 December. Art, music and drama workshops in church from 10.30am preparing for service at 3pm. Chris Benson, Beaumont College, Slyne Road, Lancaster, tel: (01524) 64278.

FYD, a partnership between deaf and hearing people, present a Family Christmas Carol Service, 7 December, 7pm, St Martin-in-the-Fields, London. Tickets and information, tel: (01342) 300080, minicom: (01342) 324164, fax: (01342) 410232.

Information

Walton Day Centre Stroke Group are sponsoring an International Millennium Stroke Competition, opening 1 January 1999. Write 50 words encouraging stroke survivors and carers, based on your own experience. Contact Tony, tel: (01932) 225581, or look at: http://members.aol.com/stroke_team/welcome.html, for rules.

Video top five



1. TITANIC (Fox Pathé): The year's biggest movie that just won't sink.



2. US MARSHALS (Warner): Tommy Lee Jones in *The Fugitive* sequel.



3. WILD THINGS (E.V.): Courtroom drama with Matt Dillon.



4. HARD RAIN (Polygram): Morgan Freeman on the run with a stash of gold.



5. MOUSEHUNT (CIC): Lee Evans run ragged by malevolent mouse.



Chart supplied by MIRB.

Video has pre-recorded word-for-word captions.

CROSSWORD ANSWERS

ACROSS: 1. Motor neurone 7. Disease 8. Ranter 11. Reunion 12. In debt 13. Long 14. Lyrical 16. Toledo 18. In camera 19. Coerce 20. Stable DOWN: 1. Modern 2. Tissue of lies 3. Reading 4. Eternity 5. Rain 6. Nose 9. Treacle 10. Retaliate 14. Lone 15. Roast 16. Tick 17. Dice

SUSSEX HEALTH CARE

NEW SPECIALIST UNITS IN HORSHAM, WEST SUSSEX

In October 1998, a new dual, registered, purpose built specialist unit was opened in Horsham, for younger adults (18-35 years) with physical disabilities. The two 10 bed units are located close to all the local amenities on a main road leading into the centre of Horsham.



Every resident will have an individual plan of care and support with provision of a full activity/continuing education programme.

NOW ADMITTING
YOU ARE WELCOME TO VISIT

Each bungalow unit has a sensory courtyard garden at its centre and there is a spacious activity centre with multi sensory room and spa pool on the site.

The units have been built to a very high specification and all rooms have track hoists and en-suite facilities.



If you would like further information about this new accommodation, or would like to visit, please phone: **KINGSMEAD LODGE**, tel: (01403) 211790 or (01403) 217338.

Classified lineage advertisements (For Sale adverts only – not for Personal adverts)

Please use this form if you are a private individual and want to place a classified advertisement. Write clearly in block capitals. Remember to allow a space between words. Use each space in the line even if you have to split words at the end.

(Part of the first line will be in bold capitals)

Ads cost £5 per line. Send this coupon with your name and address, daytime telephone number Continue on a separate sheet if necessary and a cheque for the total made payable to **Disability Now** to: 6 Market Road, London N7 9PW.

DN reserves the right to edit advertisements if necessary. Completion of this form does not guarantee inclusion in a particular issue. **Sorry no refunds.** **DN** is a non-profit making newspaper.

Personal

LADY, 46, WITH cp and hard of hearing, although can hear quite well with the help of a hearing aid, seeks a gentleman for friendship and possible relationship. I am a pleasant and quiet person; a Sagittarius. My hobbies include dining out, theatre and places of interest. I belong to Riding for the Disabled. I would be pleased to hear from you – make my Christmas. Box No. 306

32 YEAR-OLD male, 6ft 5in tall, able-bodied. Sporty, good looking, with blue eyes, dark hair. Own house and car and a reasonable job. Wltn an Aimee Mullens lookalike for fun, friendship and maybe more. Box No. 307

HI GIRLS – I'M a disabled man in his 20s, and sick of watching able-bodied people enjoying sex and taking it for granted. What about me? I want a sex life too, I want to be happy, I want a life aswell. Are you with me? Box No. 308

HI, MY NAME is Gillian Clayton and I am 30 years old. I suffer from Spina bifida and have a mild learning difficulty. My hobbies are writing letters, playing music and writing songs, which I'm planning to get recorded in the near future. I entertain old folk now and then with my dad, using a karaoke box. I do voluntary work occasionally and am involved with a group helping people with learning difficulties. I like going out for pub lunches, drinking with friends and the cinema. I look forward to hearing from you soon. Box No. 309

The Nuffield Foundation Viscount Nuffield Auxiliary Fund

Grants to make technology work for disabled people

People with disabilities are more readily given aids and equipment to help overcome their impairments than the necessary support to enable them to use such technology quickly and with ease. The Nuffield Foundation is therefore offering grants to organisations with ideas for projects investigating, adapting or demonstrating a way of employing existing equipment more effectively. In 1998 eleven grants were made, ranging from £4,000 to £24,000.

Applications are invited in two areas: learning and communication aids and mobility aids. Packages for training the user will be eligible for support, as will the evaluation of the use of the existing equipment.

The grants cannot fund the purchase or adaptation of equipment for individuals. Projects that mainly benefit an institution should indicate the ways in which the results of the work will be made more generally known.

The closing date for applications is 2 April 1999.

Application guidelines may be obtained by writing to: Nuffield Foundation, 28 Bedford Square, London WC1B 3EG, or by telephone: 0171-580 7434.

Please quote reference VNAF/SL

SEND US YOUR SMALLS...
...and make a big impression.
Small ads in **DN** reach over 65,000 people for just £5 a line.
All small ads must be paid for in advance. If you want to advertise, please use the form on the left. Send it with a cheque for the total to **Disability Now**, 6 Market Road, London N7 9PW.

For personal ads, submit about 25 words and send a cheque or postal order for £5 payable to **Disability Now with your ad. This is to help cover our costs.**

To reply to a personal ad indicate the Box Number and mark the envelope Private and Confidential. If you do not it will be opened. Send to **DN, address on page 2.**

Conditions

no car. Will write on my computer so I'm not misunderstood. Will you write to me? Box No. 316

HI THERE, I'M a 19-year-old female who has cerebral palsy and I'm looking for anyone aged 18-26 to be my friend. I will reply to all letters. Box No. 317

Household equipment

ELECTRIC MULTI-POSITION bed. Good condition, £400. Electric armchair with recline/lift. Good condition, £425. Can arrange delivery. Tel: (01689) 829186.

TWO LEANDER ELECTRIC rise/recline chairs. Brown dralon, as new, £500 each. Kingston electric riser, dralon, £300. Tel: (01204) 395721.

THERAPOSTURE ADJUSTAMATIC BED with massage facility. Never used. £1,600. Buyer collects. Tel: (01275) 541767.

ROYAMS WESTMINSTER ELECTRIC reclining chair. As new. £300 ono. Buyer collects. Tel: (01275) 541767.

PARKER LIBERTY BATH. Hydraulic chair, shower and air spa. Excellent condition, little used. £1,500. Tel: (01206) 826163.

UPRIGHT SETTEE AND chair. Designed for mobility impaired. Comfy, with arm and headrests. Seat height 20in. £455. Tel: (01206) 826163.

THE UNIQUE WALK-IN Easybath bath with whirlpool spa. As advertised in national press. As new. Less than half price. £1,200. Tel: (01244) 520425.

PORTABLE SPRING-RISE seat, unused, £125. Older Niagara massage chair, £100. Folding massage/drainage bed, £150. Tel: 0181-670 8363 (London).

Wheelchairs & scooters

SUNGIFT 300 SCOOTER. As new, very little used. £400. Tel: (01603) 871515.

POWERTEC F40 WHEELCHAIR. Excellent condition, with kerb climber and charger. £1,270 ono. Tel: (01485) 542109 (Norfolk).

ELECTRIC WHEELCHAIR HOIST. Power in and out, fits most cars. Easily fitted. £370 ono. Tel: (01485) 542109 (Norfolk).

HARRIER ELECTRIC WHEELCHAIR. Charger, puncture proof tyres, kerb climber, ramps, portable. Excellent condition. £1,250. Tel: (01992) 583386 (Herts).

DMA SHOPRIDER NIPPY powerchair/scooter. Four months old, as new. £1,300. Tel: (01375) 376769 (Essex).

STORM ELECTRIC WHEELCHAIR. German make distributed by Invacare. Genuine reason for sale. Modular design. Brochure available. Includes dual control, kerb climber, puncture proof tyres and telescopic ramps for transfer to car boot etc. £3,800 ono. Tel: 0181-660 0796.

VESSA VITESSE 200 electric wheelchair. Immaculate condition. £870. Tel: (01323) 842227.

STOWAWAY WHEELCHAIR. Small wheels, unused. £150 ono. Tel: 0114-275 1635.

STERLING 4GL 4-WHEEL scooter. Two years old, immaculate condition, charger. £1,700. Tel: (01978) 355387.

INVACARE CRUISER 2E wheelchair. Brand new batteries. Good condition. £485. Tel: (01206) 826163.

LEVO COMPACT LC stand-up wheelchair. Vgc, little used. Cost £3,500, will accept £1,500 ono. Tel: (01425) 610883.

POWERTEC ELECTRIC WHEELCHAIR for sale. 5 years old, little used. £900. Tel: 0181-940 6666.

Cars & vans

INTERBILITY HYDRAULIC LIFT, vgc, £550 ono. Tel: (01764) 684479.

VW CARAVELLE GL. 1990, 2.1i, auto. Seats 6 plus fully equipped for wheelchair, with lift etc by Invatravel. Fsh and all receipts. Sunroof, PAS, electric mirrors, MOT, taxed, excellent condition. Tel: (01255) 430117.

PEUGEOT 806, R REG. Low mileage. Constables passenger seat conversion. £16,500. Tel: (01162) 478409.

ELAP ROTATING CAR seat unit. Double sliding complete seat to fit Ford Escort MK5, 4-door, left hand passenger. With full fitting instructions. As new, offers. Tel: (01768) 890323 (after 6pm).

FORD ESCORT CHAIRMAN. 1800cc, diesel, 1992, white. Electric lowering suspension. Seats 4 plus wheelchair. 24k miles, immaculate. £6,995. Tel: (01375) 376769 (M25 in Essex).

1982 AMBULANCE, 5K MILES. New engine and gearbox. Electric lift at rear. Holds up to 3 wheelchairs or 8 seats. Good for contract or for conversion to Caravanette. £1,500 ono. Tel: (01493) 663528 (evenings).

METRO, AUTO, H REG. 1300cc, MOT. Raised roof and rear ramp for wheelchair access. £2,000 ono. Tel: 0117-979 2988 (7-9pm evenings or weekends, Bristol).

CAR HOIST, ONE year old, hardly used. Cost £800, will accept £400 ono. Tel: (01578) 730201.

ELAP ROTATING CAR seat. Dark grey, good condition. £125. Tel: (07010) 702207.

METRO CHAIRMAN, POYNTING conversion. B reg, 59k miles, MOT March 1999. Rear ramped access for wheelchair. Good condition. £12,500. Tel: (01908) 641455 (Bucks).

ELAP ROTATING CAR seat, used once in Montego, £120. Tel: 0181-670 8363 (London).

LANDROVER DISCOVERY V8. K reg, PAS, air conditioning. Converted for wheelchair. Ratco lift, automatic, 25k miles. £12,000 ono. Tel: (01903) 773736.

VW TRANSPORTER 20. X reg, lift wheelchair trackings. Seating for 4 plus driver. New MOT, taxed 6 months, good condition. £750. Tel: (01625) 878644.

FIAT FIORINO M REG. 1.1 diesel, 12,500 miles. Ramp floor clamps, winch, tinted windows. Good condition, £5,500 ono. Tel: (01495) 212882.

Wanted

LEVO CHAIR WANTED. Tel: (01282) 698190 (Lancashire).

COTSWOLD COTS

Build Cots and Beds for Adults and Children with Special Needs

We Design And Build Any Cot or Bed You Need.

New Products Extra Strong Playpens. Extra Large Stairgates. Fitted Padded Play Areas. High Quality Fair prices Information Phone 01993 842885

WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBLE VEHICLE REGISTER

ARE YOU HAVING PROBLEMS LOCATING THE USED VEHICLE YOU NEED OR DISPOSING OF YOUR EXISTING VEHICLE? Register your requirements or vehicle for sale with the Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle Register and let us match buyer with seller. For full details of this service telephone (01202) 814112

HOISTS
for lifting wheelchairs, scooters and people into cars...

WE HAVE THE ANSWER!
Ring Free 0800 214 045 for brochure or free demo
www.demon.co.uk/autochair

Autochair Ltd, Milford Lane, Bakewell DE45 1DX

Continued on page 29

For sale (also on page 30)

MERCEDES-BENZ V-CLASS & VITO
VOLKSWAGEN CARAVELLE & TRANSPORTER
Wheelchair Accessible Conversions

AGENTS FOR
• AMF • Ricon
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- Hydraulic lifts, underfloor & inboard side or rear access.
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- Electric hoists and rotating car seats for most makes of cars.
- NEW Vito Flexiliner conversion, up to 5 seats plus 2 wheelchairs. Crash tested vehicle to M1 standard.

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V-Class with AMF Back-in-Box side lift.
Recognised Mercedes-Benz Body Builder.
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Motability Accredited.

Versa® Insist on it!

USED VERSA VEHICLES FOR SALE (Wheelchair Access Vehicles)

95N Nissan Vanette Cargo 2.3 Diesel
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For further information or to arrange an appointment
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New and Nearly New, Electric Wheelchairs,
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Looking for an affordable weather proof
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Poynting Conversions
for wheelchair passengers.
'L' Renault Extra, £6,150. 'J' Renault Extra, £4,300.
'P' Renault Extra, £9,950. 'P' Nissan Cargo, £10,650.
Tel: (01722) 336048

Disability Now is not responsible for
claims made in the advertisements it
prints and all readers are advised to
check claims with the advertisers
before relying on them.

Advertisers

DN's holiday coverage starts in the
January issue.

Lasting for three issues, this is the
place to be seen!

To reserve your space, call
Richard Gresham



tel: 0171-619 7336
fax: 0171-619 7331
e-mail: editor@disabilitynow.org.uk

Holidays

Country House Holidays – SURREY

Crabhill House. Fully accessible country house – with purpose-built extension. 26 single en-suite rooms. 5 twin rooms. Licensed bar. CTV. Conservatory. Lovely gardens. Electric hoists. Help buttons. Nurses/volunteer support. Day trips to Brighton, London, Theatreland etc. From £235 pw – food/care included. For information/booking form tel: 0171-833 4579 ext 132.

Personal

HEARING AID

The Samaritans
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Anybody - Any Age - Anywhere
Able-bodied or Disabled
Choose Your Own Ideal Relationship

MUTUAL ESSENTIAL LINKS

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A specialist introduction agency for
people with disabilities. It also
welcomes caring and understanding
able-bodied people.

Phone\fax
01473 226950

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To find out more about Handidate
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Centre, 52 Chevalier Street, Ipswich,
Suffolk IP1 2BR.
E-mail: Conrad_Packwood@compuserve.com
A member of ABIA

DN is on the web. Visit our site at
<http://www.disabilitynow.org.uk>
or you can e-mail us with ideas on
editor@disabilitynow.org.uk

Courses

Disabled Artist?

Do you want to enhance your career possibilities by
learning the skills and expertise to work as an arts
workshop leader?

Leading the Way is a specially designed higher education training
course for disabled artists who would like to train as arts
workshop leaders. The course is run by a partnership between the North West
Disability Arts Forum (NWDAF) and the Liverpool Institute of Performing Arts (LIPA)
and it is accredited by Liverpool John Moores University.

The course is free, imbued with the social model of disability and specifically aimed at
disabled artists of any art form, and a minority of non-disabled applicants will be
considered. The **Leading the Way** course will run again from January to April 1999.
The course will be taught over one full day a week for twelve weeks in Liverpool and all
access requirements will be met. For example, we will pay for sign language
interpreters, personal assistants and anything else you might need.

Further details, application forms and enquiries to: **Mickey Fellowes, North West Disability
Arts Forum, 2a Franceys Street, Off Clarence Street, Liverpool L3 5YQ.**
Tel/Minicom: 0151-707 1733, Fax: 0151-708 9355,
E-mail: Mickey@nwdaft.mersinnet.co.uk

Closing date for applications is 9 December.



The Orpheus Centre in Godstone, Surrey is a residential performing arts
centre designed for disabled and non-disabled people (18-40 yrs) working
together. We offer 6-day, 3-day and even 1-day sampler courses in a wide
range of subjects including:

Musis Theatre

Drama

Songwriting

Light & Sound

Keyboards
Percussion
Music Technology

If you would like details, including prices and booking forms for our
1999 courses, please write to:

The Administrator, The Orpheus Centre, North Park Lane,
Godstone, Surrey RH9 8ND, tel: (01883) 744664,
fax: (01883) 744994.



Survey

STOP PRESS STOP PRESS

DISABILITY ON THE RADIO: WE'RE LISTENING

The BBC have commissioned a major review on the way in which disability and disability issues are treated across network radio. A significant part of the study is to find out what disabled listeners think about the issue, and we are therefore inviting YOU to take part in the study. If you have views which you would like to share with the BBC about the subject AND you think of yourself as disabled, please get in touch with Karen Ross by post, phone, fax or e-mail as follows:

Karen Ross, FREEPOST, Cheltenham & Gloucester College of Higher Education, PO Box 220, The Park, Cheltenham, GLOS, GL50 2QF, tel: (01242) 543408, fax: (01242) 532895, e-mail: KarenR@chelt.ac.uk

YOUR VIEWS ARE IMPORTANT –
PLEASE MAKE THEM COUNT

Services

MOBILE THERAPIST

One-to-one therapy in your own home.
Spinal lesions, stroke, head injuries,
optimum fitness for disabled people.
North West Birmingham area.

Tel: (07970) 871791

Holidays

Norfolk, Nar Valley Holiday Cottages

3 self-catering, all wheelchair accessible, 1 with wheel-in shower room, 2 with air baths. Mostly en-suite. On working farm - peaceful location, central for beaches and tourist attractions. Indoor heated swimming pool available for 1998.

More details and prices, contact:
Rosemary on 01760 338797.

Blagdon Farm Country Holidays Devon/Cornwall border

Superb, south-facing, wheelchair accessible luxury bungalows overlooking lake and set within 38 acres of glorious countryside. Many on-site facilities including indoor heated pool. Take-away meals delivered and equipment loan available. Tourist Board Highly Commended.

For colour brochure please contact:
Pauline and Tony Blight, Blagdon Farm, Ashwater, Beaworthy, Devon EX21 5DF. Phone: 01409 211509. Fax: 01409 211510.

THE STACKPOLE CENTRE

UNIQUE HOLIDAY COMPLEX ON THE SOUTH PEMBROKESHIRE COAST FOR FAMILIES, GROUPS & INDIVIDUALS: SELF-CATERING, COTTAGES, GROUP HOUSES & HOTEL (Wales Tourist Board 3 Crowns Highly Commended) POOL, JACUZZI, THEATRE, RESTAURANT, ART, POTTERY & MUSIC ROOMS, OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES, WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBLE LEVEL 1. For info & Holiday Pack, Tel: 01646 661425 Fax: 01646 661456

ORANGE BADGE MACHINE S.L.

Wheelchair Hire • Manual & Electric Chairs
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Arona, Tenerife

TEL/FAX: 00 34 922 79 73 55
E-mail us at orange@interbook.net

Sand and Sea – SOUTHPORT

"Sandpipers" overlooks Southport's Marine lake/beaches. Trips to the Lake District, Blackpool, Alton Towers. Accessible holiday centre, 12 single rooms, 12 twin rooms. Help buttons. Indoor swimming pool. CTV. Bar. From £250 pw – food, full care/volunteer help included. Registered with Social Services. Most physical disabilities catered for. Brochure? Call: 0171-833 4579 ext 132.

PENROSE BURDEN NORTH CORNWALL "Holiday Care Award Winners"

Holiday Cottages designed for wheelchair users and their families. Rural setting with superb views. Dogs welcome. Wood burning stoves and daily meal service. Please ring or write for colour brochure.

R&N Hall, Penrose Burden,
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(01208) 850277 or 850617

WHEELING AROUND THE ALGARVE
Self Catering villas and cottages, hotels, B&B, car hire with hand controls, adapted vans, etc. Scuba Diving courses and other sporting and leisure facilities.

David Player, Wheeling Around The Algarve, Apartado 3421,
8135 Almancil, Algarve, Portugal
Tel: 00 351 89 393636 Fax: 00 351 89 397448
E-mail: dave@player.pt Website: http://www.player.pt

LONG WINTER RENTALS, ALGARVE, PORTUGAL.
Fancy escaping the British winter and having Xmas lunch on the pool terrace? Have you seen the beautiful Almond Blossom in early to mid-January, that signals the start of our Spring? How about the exciting Carnival in February? Clear blue skies with daytime temperatures of around 16-22°C, and wonderful log fires at night.

Could you ask for more?

Contact David Player – see the advert for the Algarve, Portugal (ad above).

Brittany Cottage to let. Fully adapted for wheelchair use. Good access to beaches. Sleeps up to 6. Details **C. Hodgson.**
Tel (01924) 454300.

LLETY MIERI LLANDEILO, WEST WALES
3 charming award-winning cottages, designed for wheelchair users and their families. Peaceful rural location overlooked by Dinefwr Castle. Each warm and well equipped cottage sleeps 4. Extensive grounds and games room. Open all year. Short breaks available. Tel: Catherine McLoughlin (01558 823 059) for brochure.

JUBILEE LODGE – Essex
Purpose built holiday centre, Epping Forest, Cambridge. Southend nearby. 26 single en-suite rooms, 5 twin rooms. CTV. Motorized hoists. Bar. Conservatory. Coffee lounge. Visits/entertainment included. Help buttons. Nurses/volunteer support. Social Services registered. From £235 pw. For brochure call: 0171 833 4579 ext. 132

Recruitment (also on pages 31 & 29)

**Phab seeks to recruit 2 Co-ordinators**

(Part-time – 17.5 hours a week), salary £6,800 pa, for its Disability Awareness Training Project.

Post A will set up the project across designated London boroughs and manage the training and support schemes associated with the project.

Post B, working with Post A, will promote and co-ordinate the project and ensure the delivery of Disability Awareness Training to Client Groups.

Please apply in the first instance by letter stating relevant qualifications, to: Director of Operations, Phab, Summit House, Wandle Road, Croydon, Surrey CR0 1DF. Closing date for receipt of applications will be 11.1.99.

Phab will positively welcome applications from disabled people for these posts. Phab is an equal opportunities employer.

Registered Charity No. 283931.



Creating opportunities with disabled people

DISABLED PEOPLE'S FORUM

LEONARD CHESHIRE**Development Worker until June 2001 in 1st instance**
£12,000 per annum for 21 hour week (£20,000 full-time equivalent)

London & South West of England

We require a disabled person to work as a Development Worker to establish forums of disabled people in 3 Leonard Cheshire regions. This follows the resignation of our current worker, for health reasons. You will work from home with administrative and management support from the project office, and will need to travel extensively across the regions you work in, and meet with service users in local services. You will have experience of development work, facilitating user groups, setting up meetings, and negotiating user participation with service providers.

Applications will be considered for a 1 or 2 day week in a smaller geographical area on a job share basis.

Application pack available 30 November from:
Administrator, Leonard Cheshire Disabled People's Forum, Wyndhams, St. Joseph's Place, Devizes, Wiltshire, SN10 1DD.
Tel: (01380) 729954, Fax: (01380) 721062.

Closing date for applications 31 December 1998.

Interviews will be held in early January 1999, in Devizes.

Registered Charity No. 218186

WfAD

Waltham Forest Association of Disabled People



WfAD (Waltham Forest Association of Disabled People) wish to appoint a disabled person as an:

Independent Living trainer**Salary SO2 point 32 £21,042 (incl Outer London Weighting)**

WfAD are seeking a dynamic individual for this exciting new post. We are working in partnership with Waltham Forest Social Services to promote and support the development of independent living in Waltham Forest.

You:

- Will have a thorough understanding of community care, independent living and direct payments.
- Will have experience of promoting independent living and direct payments.
- Will be able to identify the different training needs of disabled people, carers, personal assistants and care managers.
- Will have experience of designing and delivering accessible training courses to a wide variety of audiences.

For an information pack please phone WfAD on 0181-509 0812 (voice and minicom).

Closing date for completed applications 4 January 1999.

This is a 3-year fixed term contract.

Projects

African, Asian & Caribbean Music Projects 1999/2000

- Applications are invited for African/Asian/Caribbean music projects, to be undertaken in England. This is primarily a touring scheme, intended to support musicians and bands based in England.
- The projects should fall between May 1999 and March 2000.
- For an application form, please send an A4 stamped, self-addressed envelope marked 'AAC' to: Rajan Hooper, Music Department, Arts Council of England, 14 Great Peter Street, London SW1P 3NQ.
- Closing date: Thursday 4 February 1999. LATE APPLICATIONS WILL NOT BE CONSIDERED.

The Arts Council has an equal opportunities policy and warmly welcomes applications from all sections of the community.

THE ARTS COUNCIL OF ENGLAND



SOCIAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT

HEAD OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT TEAM

Job Share 3 days a week
(Monday, Tuesday & Wednesday)
£23,766 to £25,608 pa inc pro rata

This is an excellent opportunity for a skilled personnel generalist to lead a team providing services to a large department. You will need to have substantial personnel experience including putting contract and employment law into practice, team leadership skills and be able to manage people to a high standard.

- You will be familiar with best practice in all aspects of recruitment and selection which is a key function of this post.
- You will need the ability to integrate both a quality and equality approach on a day to day basis.
- You will be expected to take responsibility for your own development with learning opportunities available for you.

Camden values the diversity of its community and aims to have a workforce which reflects this. We therefore encourage applications from all sections of the community.

To receive further information and an application form please telephone the Social Services recruitment line (24 hours) on 0171 860 5892, Minicom 0171 860 5859, E-mail your name and postal address to advertising@camden.gov.uk or write to Camden Advertising, Room 314, Town Hall, Judd Street, London WC1H 9JE. Please quote reference 10/646/W2.

Closing date: Friday, 11th December (5pm)
Successful candidates will be notified on the 15th.
Interviews: Friday, 18th December

**British Council of Disabled People Groups Development Programme**

BCODP is the national umbrella body of disabled people's organisations. The training and support programme requires a disabled person for the post of:

Administrator (full-time)
NJc Scale 4 £12,537 - £13,971

This is an interesting and varied job for someone who is committed to the work of the disabled people's movement. Fixed term contract to 31 March 2000 (possibility of future funding).

Closing date: Monday 4 January 1999.
Interviews: Monday 11 January 1999.

Freelance Project:
We also require a disabled person to develop a pilot programme and oversee publication of the "Disability - Whose Problem?" training pack (a training course run by and for disabled people on disability equality issues).

We particularly welcome applications from disabled people who experience simultaneous oppression.

Apply to: Penny Germon, BCODP, Litchurch Plaza, Litchurch Lane, Derby DE24 8AA. Tel: 0117-954 2195, Fax: (01332) 295580.

Funded by the National Lottery Charities Board.
Registered Charity No. 1068743 Company Reg. No. 3455202

Creating art, craft, music and performance for equality and positive change,

Art Shape
LIMITED

PROJECT DEVELOPMENT WORKER

to run a specific, county-wide arts project
2 year contract, 22.5 hours, £15,600 pro rata – to start January 1999.

Essential skills – good communicator, project management experience, computer literate, team worker. There will be a considerable amount of driving and site visits.

Application deadlines 7 December – interviews 16 December.

For information and job description call Art Shape, tel: (01452) 307684.

Art Shape is an Equal Opportunities Employer

Want your advert to reach more people?
Why not put your advert on DN's website?

To add yours, contact Richard Gresham,
tel: 0171-619 7336, fax: 0171-619 7331.

Deadlines for the January 1999

issue of Disability Now:

Booking deadline is 4 December

Copy deadline is 8 December

Recruitment (also on pages 30 & 29)

Kingston Association of Disabled People (KADP)

Independent Living Scheme (ILS) Co-ordinator

Salary: SO2 point 32 £21,042 incl. OLW for 35 hours per week

KADP is an organisation of disabled people. We already operate a successful and highly respected, nationally recognised Independent Living Scheme and now wish to appoint a new Co-ordinator to develop the Scheme further.

The successful applicant will have a sound knowledge of current disability legislation, a commitment to Independent living as a civil rights issue, the ability to work within the Social Model and be able to motivate and encourage individuals.

If you think you could develop Kingston's Independent Living Scheme to continue to meet the needs of current users and make it attractive, relevant and desirable to potential users, we would like to hear from you.

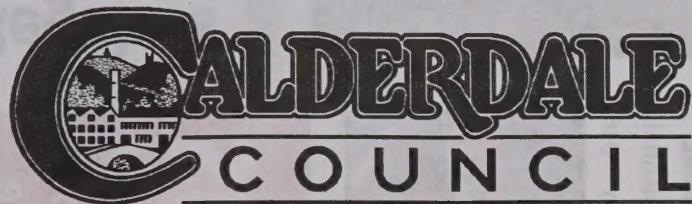
We offer a supportive team environment working from accessible premises.

Closing date for applications: Friday 18 December 1998

KADP is an equal opportunities employer and particularly welcomes disabled applicants.

Further details and an application pack (in print, large print, Braille or on tape) are available by contacting:

KADP, Siddeley House, 50 Canbury Park Road, Kingston upon Thames, Surrey KT2 6LX. Tel: 0181-255 2444 (voice and minicom), Fax: 0181-255 2441.



Department of Personnel & Management Services

**CO-ORDINATOR
(Access for the Millennium)**

**PO1 - 4: £20,346 - £21,924 pa
(3 year contract)**



We now wish to appoint someone who can promote strategies and programmes around the theme "Access for the Millennium". Your prime objective will be to ensure that the strategies and programmes are targeted at disabled people and others who would benefit from intervention/assistance and to promote social inclusion in Calderdale.

You must be:

- an energetic and creative person with experience of undertaking research projects which inform strategic change;
- able to organise/analyse and present information effectively;
- committed to the success of the "Access to the Millennium" programme;
- committed to the principles of equal opportunities and have a positive attitude towards disabled people.

Ideally you will have:

- at least two years experience of designing and managing projects in respect of disadvantaged groups and have a wide knowledge of disability issues/training;
- a relevant degree/IT skills.

If you think that you have the skills and experience to take on this challenging role, then for an information pack please contact the Personnel & Management Services Department, Bull Green House, Bull Green, Halifax HX1 2EB. Telephone - (voice and minicom): (01422) 392858.

Closing date: Friday, 4th December 1998.

This Council is committed to being an equal opportunities employer and service provider



ADKC, an organisation of disabled people who live and work in Kensington & Chelsea want to recruit a disabled person for the following post:



Action Disability
Kensington & Chelsea

Holiday & Leisure Unit Officer

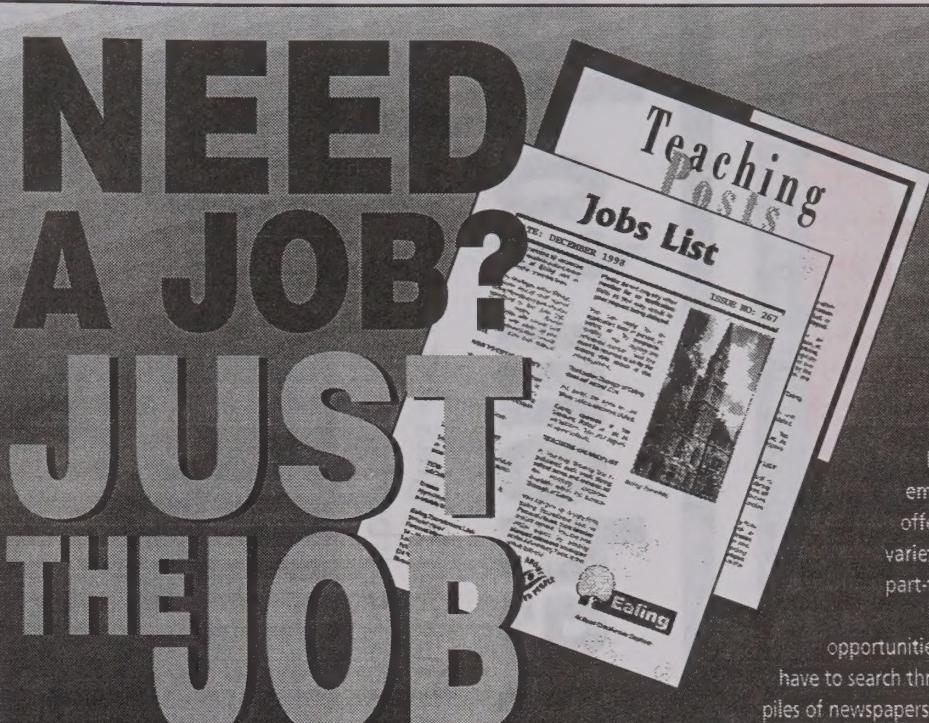
**Salary: Scale 6 £18,640 - £19,728
35 hours per week.**

- To organise 6 group holidays (and lead a number of these)
- To work as part of ADKC's Leisure & Holidays Unit with main responsibility of providing group holidays for disabled people in Kensington & Chelsea
- Provide information on accessible holiday venues in UK and abroad
- To support the general activities of the Leisure & Holiday Unit

Some experience of organising group activities would be an advantage.

Office fully accessible. For an application pack please ring ADKC on 0181-960 8863 (minicom users 0181-960 8888). Application pack available in all formats.

**Closing date: 7 December 1998
Interview date: 14 December 1998**



We are one of West London's largest employers. So, we offer a tremendous variety of jobs - from part-time positions to long-term career opportunities, and you don't have to search through exhaustive piles of newspapers to find the right job. Once you've joined us, you'll benefit from training and development programmes which will make the most of your potential.

To obtain a copy of either the Jobs List or Teaching Posts vacancies list, please contact Recruitment & Equalities, Advertising Team, 5th Floor Perceval House, 14-16 Uxbridge Road, London W5 2HL, and they will send you the first copy free of charge. For additional copies please send SAEs for as many as you require.

Or telephone: 0181 758 5976
Minicom: 0181 758 8191



An Equal Opportunities Employer



If you have a disability, we will accept applications in any reasonable form and we will regularly send you free copies!

Inside Information**CABnet Project Manager
- Bureaux Case
Management
3 years fixed term**

CABnet 2000 is a pioneering IT programme with a major national charity which has recently been awarded a substantial grant from the National Lottery Charities Board for the development of a computer based case management system for introduction in citizens advice bureaux throughout the country.

We're the largest network of independent advice centres in Europe. The CABnet 2000 programme will develop a range of electronic information systems for use in all our 750 major outlets. Our objective is simple. It is to ensure that the CAB Service continues to provide the combination of access, quality advice and value for money that will ensure we will retain the confidence of our clients and those that provide our funding as we move into the 21st century.

We want a project manager able to lead the design and development of a new computer based case management system that will replace our current paper based information systems. The case management system will bring significant benefits to each CAB outlet and will help the Service to

**Based in either
Leeds or London**
**Leeds: up to £25,800 p.a. inc.
London: up to £28,800 p.a. inc.**

deal even more effectively with the over 6.5 million queries we assist with each year.

This is an ambitious and challenging project but it presents a unique opportunity for you to lead a project of national significance. You will already have practical experience as a successful project manager using formal methods. You will know how to achieve an agreed outcome, on time, on budget and to specified quality. You will also know about managing change in organisations.

You will be an excellent communicator and you will know how to manage a successful relationship with key external suppliers. You will be working in an organisation of 28,000 people of whom around 25,000 are volunteers so you will need to be a leader with the ability to inspire confidence in a very large number of stakeholders. If you think you match up come and join our team by leading one of the most exciting current developments in the voluntary sector.

For an information pack (CVs not accepted) please contact the Personnel Department, NACAB, 115-123 Pentonville Road, London N1 9LZ. Tel: 0171 833 4370 (24 hour answerphone). Email: jobinfo@nacab.org.uk Please quote reference number 98/91. Closing date: 16 December 1998.



We are committed to working towards equal opportunities.

The CAB Service is independent and provides free, confidential and impartial information and advice on every subject



Disability Now

£1.60 December 1998

The award winning newspaper for everyone with an interest in disability

Freedom to love

The new Human Rights Act could give disabled people the right to life, liberty, sex and marriage. See page 1.

Thumbs up for inclusion: Comedian Ben Elton and Rachel Parkinson join up to promote In From The Margins, a conference which came up with positive ways to include marginalised young people.



Over £850 of special offers inside

COMMENT

DDA cases: would yours have the Right bite? p8



CHRISTMAS SPECIAL

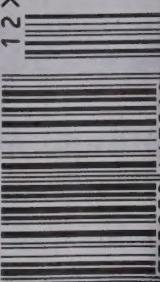
Presents with potential for all the family p16



Jobs
pages 30-31
and on our website

ISSN 0958-4676

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Prices start from £6495

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ALL PRICES ASSUME VAT AND ROAD LICENCE ZERO RATING.
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providing exactly the right balance of practicality, style and performance at

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